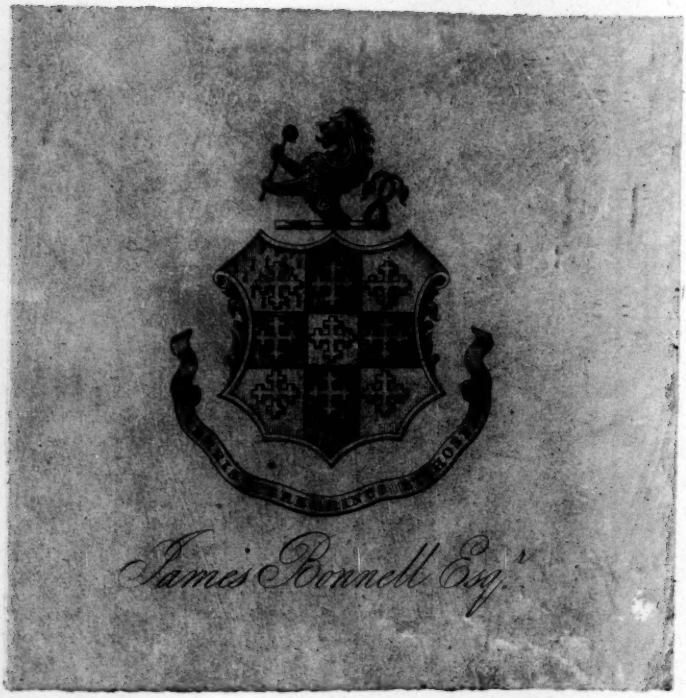
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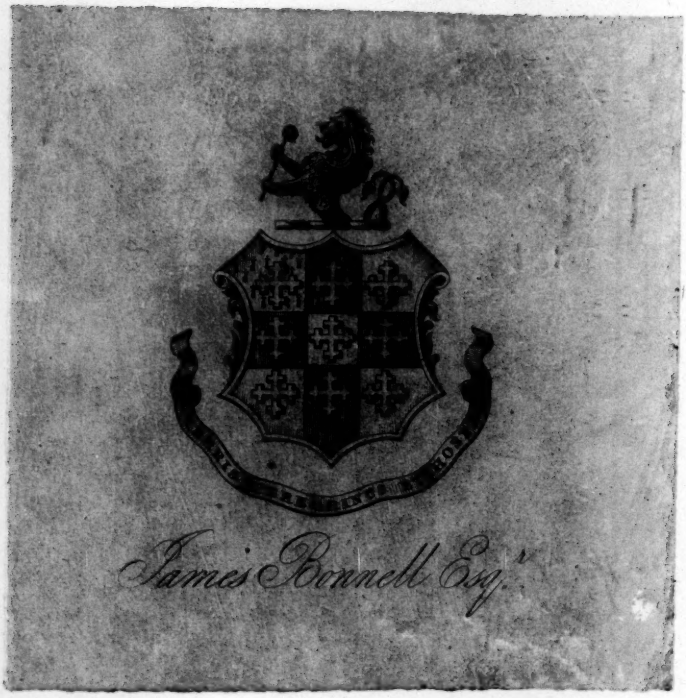
James Bonnell Esq.r

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EXHIBITIONS

OF

THE HEART;

A NOVEL,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

DEDICATED (BY PERMISSION)

TO

THE QUEEN.

BY

MISS HUTCHINSON.

"'Tis harder far to please than give offence."

YOUNG.

VOL. IV.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

EXHIBITIONS

OF

THE HEART.

CHAPTER I.

" O! hateful error! melancholy's child!
" Why doſt thou ſhew to the apt thoughts of man
" The things that are not?"

SHAKSPEARE.

OSMOND EVINGTON recollecting the diſordered ſtate of mind in which he left the Count De Belville, immediately concluded, that inſanity had actuated him to perpetrate the dreadful violence —" O! horrid! horrid!" exclaimed he, " that I ſhould have brought the ſuffering wife to witneſs ſuch a ſcene of woe!" —He burſt open the door of the apartment, where lay de Belville on the floor, weltering in blood, in his perfect ſenſes,

though much alarmed and in great pain from the ſhot which had paſſed through his leg—"Good heavens, ſir!" ejaculated Oſmond—"what could induce you to ſuch raſhneſs?—Where are your ſenſes fled?"

De Belville ſmiled, "You labour under a miſtake, my friend; this ariſes not from the effects of raſhneſs, but an untoward event."

"Ha!—my brother's gun!—What can this mean?

"Hear me, Mr. Evington," cried de Belville: "As I was walking precipitately up and down the room, the gun fell in an unfortunate direction, and occaſioned this accident: the hurt is trifling in conſideration to the alarm I fear it has given to the family."

Oſmond lamented the unlucky misfortune, at the ſame time he rejoiced that it had not proved fatal to his friend.—The ſurgeon being arrived, young Evington

ton directed his ſteps towards the afflicted Julienne, whom he ſtill found ſenſeleſs. The little Edward ſtood weeping over her moſt piteouſly; nor could the ſervants perſuade the child ſhe would ſoon recover. Never having before ſeen a perſon in a fit, her cloſed eyes, palid cheeks, her colourleſs lips and lifeleſs frame, convinced little Edward that his mother was dead. He kiſſed her hands repeatedly—crying—"How cold ſhe is! oh! fie, Mr. Oſmond! you brought my dear mama here to kill her—Naughty Engliſhman! take back your watch—oh! mama! Julienne! what ſhall I do without you?—Naughty Mr. Oſmond! I hate you—I do—becauſe you told ſtories about papa—."

Near a quarter of an hour elapſed before the Counteſs de Belville recovered any degree of recollection; and then, leſt the child's cries ſhould cauſe a relapſe, Oſmond with difficulty tore him away, while in piercing ſhrieks he called upon

his mama, Julienne. Vainly did he endeavour to pacify him, by adding, that he was going to ſee his papa; to whom, in reality, he would have led him, had he not feared that Edward would tell de Belville that he had killed his mother, and thereby acquaint him with her being in the houſe; a circumſtance he thought moſt prudent to conceal at preſent. He therefore delivered the diſconſolate little boy to the ſteward, until he ſhould be permitted to return to his mother. Oſmond reviſited the patient with the ſurgeon, who pronounced his wound not dangerous, but that he muſt be kept quiet, if he wiſhed it to continue ſo, particularly deſiring him to retire to reſt—"Reſt!" replied de Belville—"reſt! ſaid you?—Alas! I can have none, until I am with my wife! Unfortunate accident! that retards my anxious ſteps directing their courſe towards her dear cottage.—Will ſhe not come to me?—ah! yes; confident I am ſhe will—My poor mother too!

too! ſhe will come alſo—My boy will run to me in a moment!"

"Remember," returned Oſmond, "the ſurgeon's injunctions. You ſhall ſee your wife, but it muſt be to-morrow—*This night at leaſt, with me, forget your care.*"

"I am ſo indebted to you, that your wiſhes muſt be my commands—I ſubmit; —yet, if I might only ſee my little one to-night.—Could you not ſteal him from his mother unobſerved?"

"Be it ſo — have patience — by the time you are in bed, he ſhall be with you."—So ſaying, Oſmond returned to the fair invalid, whom he found much recovered. On her lap lay faſt aſleep the ſweet boy; who, after having exhauſted all his queſtions and anſwers, added to the unuſual lateneſs of the hour, with the fatigue his tender mind and body had gone through, by walking, laughing and crying, ſoon forgot, in his mother's preſence, the deſire of ſeeing his father.

The Counteſs being fully-ſatisfied that her huſband was in no danger, her health and ſpirits returned: compelled, however, to undergo the ſame puniſhment of confinement, as did de Belville, ſhe now intimated ſome anxiety to have her mother acquainted with the cauſe of this delay.—Oſmond waited not to give an anſwer—regardleſs of bodily fatigue or of trouble, he promiſed to be the meſſenger, and to return again ſoon: leaving ſtrict orders to the ſervants, not to permit a meeting to take place, or to mention that the Counteſs de Belville was in the houſe; at the ſame time, he ſeverely reprimanded them for leaving a loaded piece in the apartment above ſtairs.

This done, he haſtened to inform Madame de Courcy of her daughter's detention for that night. The old lady heard it with chagrin, yet with tolerable reſignation; and poured forth her grateful thanks for the trouble Oſmond had

taken

taken on their account. He then loſt no time in returning to the Counteſs de Belville. Edward was awake on the re-entrance of young Evington, who found that his mother had prepared her little boy for ſeeing his father, by forbidding him to mention any thing of her being in the houſe. The little child faithfully promiſed to be ſilent, and departed with Oſmond—" Oh! my long-loſt boy!" cried de Belville, claſping the little cherub with rapturous delight; while Edward, always prattling, ſung forth the praiſes of his friend Oſmond by repeating the whole tranſaction of the ſnuff-box, watch, marbles, &c. Encouraged and fondled by the overjoyed parent, he continued chattering, till at laſt, forgetful of his promiſe, he divulged that his mother was in the houſe at that very moment :—" Your mother! what my Julienne! my wife! in this houſe!" exclaimed de Beville, catching the child's

words :—" where, where is Mr. Evington?"—Oſmond had left the room, but was re-entering as he heard his name called upon.—De Belville urged him in the ſtrongeſt terms to conduct the counteſs to his chamber, " otherwiſe," ſaid he, " I will hazard all riſks—and repair to her's.

" Will no perſuaſions, no arguments avail?" replied Oſmond: " hear me, my dear friend; Madame de Belville certainly is beneath the ſame roof with yourſelf, but ſhe is wiſer than you are, and has retired to reſt."—He then recited the cauſe of her indiſpoſition.—" On her recovery," continued Oſmond, " the ſurgeon pronounced that an interview to-night might prove very prejudicial to both: ſhe therefore forbears to gratify her impatient wiſhes, on condition that you do the ſame. Now be adviſed—be prudent—ſhe is well, and happy."

De

De Belville was ever paſſionately fond of his wife, from whom he had been long ſeparated, and for whom he had not only travelled ſucceſſively night after night, unrefreſhed by reſt or ſleep, but encountered every peril and difficulty that could befal him, to prevent, as it were, their meeting—and which to effect with ſafety, he knew ſhe was travelling through France on foot, under the diſguiſe of a peaſant, or itinerant vender of trifling articles; with the additional burthen of her little boy on her back; their endeavours proved nevertheleſs abortive; and though fate ſheltered them together under the ſame roof for a ſhort time, it determined they ſhould not enjoy the felicity of knowing it, until the wide ocean and numberleſs miles once more divided them; theſe reflections, and many other, no leſs painfully pleaſing (if we may ſo expreſs ſuch feelings), aſſailed his mind; poſſeſſing, however, infinite good ſenſe, the tran-

ſport of love and joy, and the turbulence of paſſion, could only laſt a ſhort period: as the delirium abated, Reaſon aſſumed her prerogative, calmed his perturbed ſpirits, and prepared a paſſage for her ſiſter Patience, to guide her forſaken reins.—He now abided by Oſmond's counſels, and began to be better reconciled to the propriety of his admonitions. —After kiſſing his darling boy, and returning thanks to his God, and to his friend, for the immutable goodneſs of the one, and the attention of the other, he ſwallowed a compoſing draught which the ſurgeon had ſent him, and ſhortly after crept into the ſoft arms of ſlumber.

As ſoon as Edward was in bed, Oſmond prevailed on the counteſs to partake of the ſupper.—She pleaded indiſpoſition — but apprehending that ſhe would only retire to ruminate over the foregoing incidents, and perhaps fancy her

her huſband's wound pregnant with danger, he would take no refuſal.—The effects of joy and fear, however, robbed them of all appetite, and the repaſt was taken off the table nearly in the ſame ſtate they found it. Oſmond had, notwithſtanding, gained his point; for he beheld, with pleaſure, the counteſs retire to her apartment perfectly tranquil, and learnt the next morning that ſhe had paſſed a tolerably good night.—De Belville awoke early, and waited with inexpreſſible deſire the approach of his Julienne, who, with no leſs impatience flew to her beloved Huſband.

We will leave it to the affectionate wife, and to the tender huſband, to conceive the mutual bliſs, this meeting afforded: and however the fond lover may anticipate its raptures, and the duteous, the affectionate daughter paint to her imagination, all that is exquiſite, every ſenſation grateful to her heart, dear to

her memory, that is chaſte and extatic, they will ſtill form but an imperfect idea of the tranſports of love, of joy, and gratitude, this long-ſeparated pair experienced on being re-united.—Happy de Belville! happy Julienne! requited and requiting, may every future period be diveſted of alloy in your affection!—Virtue meets its own reward: its native luſtre is of that brilliancy that its bright rays will ſooner or later pierce through the darkeſt clouds of adverſity; like the pure diamond, though placed in a dungeon, it ſhines with reſplendent brightneſs—like the polar ſtar to the miſled traveller, it is a certain guide. It defies all time, and chance, and change.

" Virtue could ſee to do what virtue would.
" Though ſun and moon were in the flat ſea ſunk."
MILTON.

During this conjugal interview, Ormond walked down to the dowager Counteſs de Belville, whom he learnt, from

from Liſette, to be extremely ill.—The phyſician had made his viſit by Oſmond's expreſs orders, and ſeemed to think her conſtitution too much impaired to recover; but that probably her diſolution might be protracted.

Henry Aſhwood and Liſette here joined them, and exclaimed with exultation, "Now let the tongue of ſlander, if ſhe *can*, wipe away her malicious reports—let her efface the name of kept-miſtreſs, inſtead of wife. I knew it was falſe: deceit in every ſphere of life will wear a maſk; but here I ſaw plainly there was no diſguiſe—bleſt, thrice bleſt, be my pretty Liſette for divulging this ſecret!"

"Then," ſaid Oſmond, "ſuppoſe you were to endeavour to give her one of thoſe bleſſings, by making her a good huſband?—ſhe reſtore you to a ſecond, by making you a tender wife?—and leave the Almighty to grant the third, in a virtuous offspring?"

Liſette's

Liſette's blue eyes could not deny the arrangement to be ſatisfactory to her own feelings, though her crimſoned cheeks proved that ſhe dared not confeſs it. Henry's open countenance was overſpread with a glow of heart-felt rapture; his eyes ſparkled, and he ſought to meet in thoſe of Liſette's compliance with his wiſhes—but they were caſt down in the utmoſt confuſion.—" It ſhould be my ſtudy, ſir, to accompliſh the firſt bleſſing," replied Henry with ardour, " and I am ſure Liſette would ever confer the ſecond, by making me bleſt indeed."—" Enough!" cried Oſmond, " her looks impart the tender confeſſion.—Here"—taking her hand, " as her father, I give it you for ever; and as your *friend*, I adviſe you to ſecure it at the altar without loſs of time."

Henry caught the precious gift—folded her to his boſom, and kiſſed her tenderly, exclaiming, " She is then mine for

for ever!"—"Surely," ſaid Oſmond, "I merit ſome reward for diſcovering what you both ſo much wiſhed, yet could not accompliſh."—Henry aſſured him, that none he could aſk, in his power to give, ſhould be denied.—"Then I will take it from the lips of your betrothed,"—doing which, he left Liſette more confuſed and abaſhed than ever.—Henry proteſted it was the greateſt recompence, as it was the higheſt favour, he could grant, and what he would refuſe to any other man living.

Oſmond then promiſed to obtain farmer Aſhwood's immediate conſent to the nuptials, which he eaſily procured: the good old man rejoiced to have his ſon united to a virtuous wife, and gave him his farm-houſe as a marriage portion; only requeſting he might be permitted to live with them.—Eglantine eſteemed Liſette, and ſincerely partook of her brother's felicity.

On young Evington's return home, he found de Belville, by the help of the ſervants, mounting his horſe, and going to his mother, with the counteſs, who propoſed to walk by his ſide.—" O ! Mr. Oſmond!" cried Edward, running to him, " mama tells me ſhe is going home to put on blue ribbons, and won't wear thoſe ugly black ones any more ; are you not very happy ? I'm ſure I am ; and then ſhe will be like her own picture. Papa ſays too he won't have that black coat on again, it looks ſo ſad, don't it, ſir ? I like a red coat, or a white one turned up with red, the ſame as my uncle de Courcy's."

Oſmond lifted him into a farmer's little chaiſe, which he procured for the counteſs the preceding night, and, taking the reins from Julienne, proceeded ſlowly to the " Fugitive Cot ;" from whence Count de Belville wrote to his young pupil, Charles Sinclair, and acquainted

quainted him with the tranſactions that had taken place ſince he left London, and at the ſame time diſengaging himſelf from any further attendance, in the capacity of tutor; here he expreſſed himſelf much hurt, with no leſs ſincerity than regret, that the wound he had received, prevented him taking a perſonal farewel of his ever-eſteemed friend, and requeſted the favour that a regular correſpondence might exiſt between them.

Young Evington having previouſly informed the Count and Counteſs de Belville that he was compelled to leave Devonſhire that day, now ordered a poſt-chaiſe, and with all poſſible expedition joined his regiment, which was under orders for the continent; and Oſmond once more embarked upon an ocean, ſcarcely leſs troubled than his own mind; aggravated the more from not having had the ſatisfaction of receiving any letters from his relations abroad.

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abroad. Toſſing upon the watery element, encircled by new acquaintances, new ſcenes, and new occupations, we leave Oſmond and return to Bruſſels.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

" Il cuor gradiſce
" E ſervé à lui, ch'il ſuo dover compiſce."
METASTASIO.

AT Bruſſels, then, we find Mr. Evans ſtill unable to leave his room, although his health appears to be conſiderably renovated.—Matilda's pallid cheek, like the tender lily of the vale, which droops from the ſcorching rays of the mid-day ſun, pourtrayed that her delicate frame had undergone a ſevere ſhock from the fever's rage, during her late illneſs.—Nor does Maria ſeem to have ſtolen the roſes from her friend Matilda, or the lucid brilliancy from her no leſs heavy eye.—Ah, Maria! what means that unuſual languor? what means that tear, which the unbidden ſigh uſhers to your long-

long-fringed eye-lids, and leaves it trembling there?—while the chearleſs ſmile, mingled with love and diſdain, checks its pearly progreſs down your cheek! ſomething has diſturbed your wonted peace, and fills your boſom with bitterneſs and grief.

This was indeed the truth, too well teſtified by the following letter from Mr. Varennes, addreſſed to Mr. Evington, a few days after his departure from Bruſſels, and which, by her huſband's ſpecial deſire, Mrs. Evington opened.

" Eſteemed friend,

" I have harboured a viper in my houſe—foſtered the young ſerpent in my boſom. O! my friend, ſhun the poiſonous adder! though young, it is reeking with venom, leſt too late you ſuffer from its ſting.—It is Melcourt! yes—Melcourt is falſe!—Gracious heaven! do I live to tell it? Is age to become the ridicule

of

of youth ?—is the wiſdom of experience to be duped by the artifice and cunning of a boy ? Unhappy, wicked monſter ! —my houſe, my purſe, were at your command ! my fortune, when death's icy hand had cloſed theſe eyes for ever, and from thy baſeneſs, would all have been thine !—Inſidious hypocrite !

" Acquaint your amiable Maria, my dear ſir, of his perfidy, that ſhe may deſpiſe him as I do. Tell her that Melcourt is unworthy of a ſeat in her affections ; for he is wicked and deceitful !—Tell her, he has barbarouſly deſpoiled his fond mother of every ſhilling ; and while he ſpent hundreds at the gaming table, and with the miſerable wantons of her ſex, he could inhumanly ſee this too-indulgent mother feed upon bread and water ; deprive herſelf of even the neceſſaries of life, to ſkreen her ſon's folly from the world, and from they whom ſhe knew to be his beſt friend.—Tell her,

her, that this unfortunate mother is now lingering in a priſon, while he is doubtleſs baſking in the ſmiles of purity and innocence, or if not with you, in the arm of depravity.—Tell her alſo, that vice has petrified his heart to ſtone; that at the moment he is ſoliciting her hand, he is betrothed not only by words, and the moſt ſacred promiſes, but by written teſtimonies to another maid, equally lovely as herſelf, ſave that ſhe is fortuneleſs. —Indeed, my friend, were I his father, I could not grieve more. Think me not weak, when I confeſs that my tears for this reprobate *protégé*, whom I conſidered as good, generous, and brave, dim my ſight, and blot the paper as I addreſs you.—My wife is ſtill reluctant to believe her favourite culpable: would I could with any degree of reaſon entertain the ſame doubts; but glaring truths carries convictions with them.—I can only diſcard him from my roof, but never from my memory; there he muſt dwell

as

as long as memory exiſts, a ſad memento of man's ingratitude.—Every bleſſing attend you and yours! kind love to my ſweet Matilda: I hope her father is better.—Farewel, my friend; may your peace never be ſacrificed like that of your

ACHILLES VARENNES."

Mrs. Evington's emotions on peruſing this truly melancholy account of the man whom ſhe already conſidered as her ſon, and on whom her child's affections were fixed, became painful to the extreme.—Mrs. Munſter was fortunately the only perſon preſent when ſhe received this epiſtle—to her ſhe exclaimed, "There, my dear Mrs. Munſter!" throwing her the letter, "read, and tell me if a finer form, and more engaging manners, ever, covered a baſer heart? Where is the man we may truſt? who ſhall wonder that inexperienced youth—that the daughters

of

of innocence and chaſtity, are enſnared by the wicked, when the hoary head is not proof againſt ſuch diſſimulation."

With aſtoniſhment, Mrs. Munſter ſcanned over the nearly unintelligible lines, ſo viſibly were they written with a trembling hand, and ſo much effaced by tearful blots; while Mrs. Evington reclined her head upon her hand, rejoining—"However diſtreſſed I am in being ſo much deceived in Melcourt, moſt heartily do I thank Providence that my daughter will yet eſcape the crocodile's power.—How ſhall I act, my dear friend, to give the leaſt pang to my ſweet child's feelings, and yet inform her of his unworthineſs?"

They adviſed and conſulted ſome time together, and determined at all events to deny him the houſe. This reſolution was ſcarcely taken ere Maria entered, ſaying Melcourt had brought them tickets

tickets for the play, that evening, a favourite piece * "*Le Cadi dupé, et l'Erreur fatal.*"—"Shall we go, my dear madam?"

"Aſſuredly," ſaid Mrs. Evington, ſcarcely knowing what ſhe anſwered, by endeavouring to hide the concern ſhe experienced, which nevertheleſs alarmed Maria, who now preſſed ſo earneſtly to learn the cauſe of her agitation from apprehending that an accident had befallen ſome of her abſent relatives, that Mrs. Munſter was of opinion, ſince Maria could not appear in the theatre with Melcourt, it were better to account for it at once. In conſequence, ſhe lightly touched upon the poſſibility of their being deceived in Melcourt: but Maria, with all the vehemence and energy of love, declared it impoſſible, and would not hear him accuſed.

* "*The Cadiz duped,*" and "*The Fatal Errour.*"

" My deareſt girl, be not too poſitive; for I am ſure if there were not ſome foundation for the report, we ſhould not have heard it."

" Then, my dear mother, you ſuſpect more than you have told me: ah! I well know, you would not have ſaid ſo much on mere ſuppoſition:—tell me, tell me all!—if this heart muſt"—Her colour fled, and ſhe ſunk upon a chair.—" Maria, my love!—have you no fortitude?"

" Tell me then, madam; I will ſhew you I have, if you will only ſatisfy my queſtion: does Melcourt merit your accuſation? if ſo—I *muſt*, oh! I *will*, teach my heart to forget him."

" Are you ſure, Maria, of what you promiſe? and will not the certainty make you recede from that promiſe?"

Maria aſſured her mother that ſhe was prepared to hear the worſt with reſignation; and Mrs. Evington, perſuaded that

that it were better to relieve her ſuſpenſe than to permit collateral hints to prey upon her mind, continued to confirm her words, and to teach her daughter—

" To bear unmov'd the wrongs of baſe mankind,
" The laſt, the hardeſt conqueſt of the mind."

Broken ſobs were all the anſwers ſhe could return; at length ſhe cried, " The puniſhment is indeed ſevere—yet have I drawn it upon myſelf—Ah why did I miſbelieve my dear brother?—partial, deceiving heart, you were deaf to his advice!—and now—wretched, deluded girl that I am!—Ah ſave me! hide me from him—he comes!—perjured Melcourt! hide me from him—Oh my mother! my mother!"

Maria, hearing his well-known footſteps on the ſtairs, the conflict became too great—her ſoul recoiled—her heart ceaſed to beat, and ſhe fainted, before

Mrs. Munſter could forbid his entrance. —On ſeeing Maria lie ſenſeleſs in her mother's arms, he flew to her aſſiſtance.

" Your preſence, Mr. Melcourt," ſaid Mrs. Evington, is as unneceſſary as it is unwiſhed—and I muſt beg of you, ſir, to retire immediately."

" Unwiſhed !" rejoined Melcourt—" by heavens, I'll not leave my angel, Maria, my love, in this ſituation—Maria! my beloved !"

As the faintneſs was ſoon diſperſed by the aid of ſalts, ſhe opened her languid eyes, on hearing him paſſionately call upon her name.

" Add not to my grief by your preſence, faithleſs, perjured man, inſidious Melcourt ! leave me ! leave me for ever !" articulated Maria, in mournful accents, hiding her face in the boſom of her mother, who now with authority deſired he would

would inſtantly quit the apartment; adding, that his own conſciouſneſs would beſt interpret the cauſe of this diſmiſſion."

Melcourt bowed, and rejoined with great unconcern, " It ſhall be, madam, for ever—had I thought my viſits unwelcome I ſhould not have intruded."

" When I believed Mr. Melcourt a man of principle and honour, his viſits were always deſirable; ſince I find him neither the one or the other, they are highly diſpleaſurable," ſaid Mrs. Evington, emphatically.—A colliſion of events ſo unexpected, betwixt love and anger, was a painful combat for Maria.—Melcourt had made a deep and rapid progreſs in her affections, and though love yielded to remorſe, for a while, as the one ſubſided, the other revived, and her heart was rent with contending emotions. Mrs. Munſter by various means ſought to paliate her diſtreſs.—" She, my dear ma-

dam," ſaid Maria, " who has ever ſincerely loved, who has believed the object of her choice unexceptionable, and endowed with every outward charm to faſcinate, and who has like me been deceived—ſhe alone can feel for my diſappointment. The boſom which has never been pierced by the keen weapon of deceit, oh! let it rejoice in its exemption from the ſharpeſt of all human anguiſh—from the pangs of diſappointed love, which indeed have no cure, no alleviation, no comfort, but in the conſoling recollection that it had virtuous felicity for its object, and wiſhed to procure that felicity by a conduct reſulting from the beſt intentions, and the pureſt motives."

" Thine were unqueſtionably ſuch, my love," replied Mrs. Munſter, " and will ſhew themſelves triumphant in Maria, though the progreſs may be tedious, and the hardeſt conqueſt of the mind.—Victory will redound to your laſting credit," continued

tinued ſhe, much affected by obſerving Maria penetrated with grief.

Several days elapſed ſince Melcourt received his diſmiſſal, and as Maria began to appear tolerably tranquil, Mrs. Munſter, equally anxious for Matilda's health and ſpirits, which were much impaired, from various cauſes, and more eſpecially from the continual attendance ſhe gave her ſick father, propoſed, by way of amuſement, they ſhould viſit the theatre that evening. The propoſal was acceded to by all, except Maria, who pleaded indiſpoſition. On this account Mrs. Evington alſo declined going; but Maria declared ſhe would accompany them herſelf, much as ſhe felt unequal to the exertion, provided any perſon remained at home in compliment to her: adding, ſhe ſhould have the pleaſure to bear Mr. Evans company, read to him, or play cheſs with him, either of which were more in union to her own feelings,

than the repreſentation of ſorrows that aggravated her own, or of happineſs that muſt contraſt with her wretchedneſs, or of mirth which ſhe could not participate—" When the mind is diſeaſed," ſaid Maria, " its moſt ſovereign remedy is to follow its own dictates: all others, as it is iraſcible, frets the ſore, inſtead of healing the injured part. Solitude is grief's old nurſe, and when another ſupplants her, the patient becomes fretful and uneaſy—fancies no one adminiſters the medicines with efficacy, and ſhe yearns after her favourite attendant. Grief with *her*, unboſoms her complaints, tells of her pains, her wants, her woes, unawed, and unmoleſted by fear. Grief, when forced into public haunts for pleaſure, ſhrinks from every beholder's eye; fearful they ſhould diſcern the cauſe of her ſufferings, and turn them to ridicule. The ſmiles that play upon every cheerful countenance are ſharp thorns to her acheing heart; for ſhe has nothing to ſmile at,

at, and ſhe fancies it is the ſarcaſtic ſneer at her dejection —Do they laugh? grief recoils at the gay ſound, it vibrates on her heart, and jars upon every unſtrung nerve. Thus each ſcene loſes its charm, becauſe the ſight is dimmed by internal commotions, and every ſprightly paſſage loſes its brilliancy, becauſe the oral faculties are deaf to aught but the voice of ſorrow."

Mrs. Evington yielded her point, and accompanied Mrs. Munſter and Matilda to the theatre. As it was a benefit night, they went early, attended by ſeveral foreigners of diſtinction, and Captain Oſnaburg, whom we left the happy meſſenger of news from Ofmond.

CHAP. III.

" So like the chances are of love and war,
That they alone in this diſtinguiſh'd are:—
In love the victors from the vanquiſh'd fly;
They fly that wound, and they purſue that die."

WALLER.

MR. Evans having fallen into a light ſleep, Maria ſat down to write to her brother in the dining-room.—To Oſmond ſhe freely opened her heart, and to him ſhe now diſburthened its load, while the recollective tear for having diſregarded his fraternal admonitions, and the oblique inſinuations of Melcourt's inſincerity, ſucceſſively effaced the nice-penned words as ſhe traced them on the paper.—While ſitting thus attentively, in correſponding with the friend and brother of her heart, ſhe heard not the door gently open,

open, or the footſteps that ſoftly bore Melcourt behind her chair, who had watched this favourable opportunity to introduce and to exculpate himſelf. It was no ſmall gratification to him to find her bathed in tears, particularly when over her ſhoulder he read, " unhappy Maria! why did ſhe give her heart to one ſo dear to her, and yet ſo unworthy !— why does faithleſs intermeddling *hope* ſtill make me wiſh him wrongly accuſed? —but alas! the thought"—

" See at your feet that Melcourt, ſo dear to you! hear him, lovely Maria! and your hopes are realized !" exclaimed Melcourt, availing himſelf of the moment, and kneeling before the terrified Maria, who ſtarted at his approach.— " O! cruel, loveliеſt Maria, hear me !—let not the partial prejudice of your miſinformed mother condemn your faithful Melcourt."

Maria had perused Mr. Varennes' letter, and though, in a parenthesis of past fondness, she wished black even turned to white, she knew the wish wholly impossible. The worthy Mr. Varennes, his guardian, friend, and protector, would never allege so many accusations against him, were he not thoroughly convinced of their veracity, and of his unworthiness. Conscious of Mr. Varennes' integrity, she recovered her surprize, and rising from her chair, with the dignity of injured innocence, she chid the transitory pleasure his presence awakened in her heart, and replied—"This intrusion, Mr. Melcourt, after what has passed, but too powerfully corroborates what has been said of your real character, and renders all vindication on your part ineffectual."

"My real character! cruel, adored Maria! explain yourself."

"All explanation, sir, between us is now

now wholly unneceſſary, and ill-timed at this juncture."

She then took her letter, and was departing, but Melcourt ſnatched her trembling hand, and, for the firſt time, lamented the treaſure he was on the point of loſing, vehemently exclaiming—"By heavens! you ſhall not quit me thus!—by all that's ſacred! I ſwear I never violated one breach of promiſe to you, moſt amiable, moſt unkind of your ſex! —will you drive to deſpair the man you once bleſt with your affection, who ſtill is *dear* to you?"—Maria's ſelf-pride, or perhaps a little becoming vanity, whiſpered, that a degree of upbraiding arrogance accompanied theſe laſt words, uttered as they were, in the moſt ſupplicating poſture—to be told by him, by one who had acted the moſt deceitful part, that notwithſtanding her reſentment, "he was ſtill dear to her," rouſed her almoſt relenting ſpirit. "Learn, Mr. Melcourt," ſaid

ſaid Maria, with majeſtic pity, " that when, ſhielded by the maſk of virtue, you gained my eſteem, it was no hard taſk to gain my affection. The one is now thrown aſide by the hand of detection; and I bluſh not to inform you, ſir, neither at preſent are your's—whatever I may have written, reflection has already annulled; and ſo much do I repent, that I only condeſcend to remain in your preſence, ſir, while I convince you of the truth of this aſſertion, by tearing this letter to atoms.—Leave my hand, Mr. Melcourt"—ſaying which ſhe tore herſelf away, and retired to her father's room, leaving the diſappointed, and now angry lover, to meditate on his ignominious diſmiſſion.—However, as in ſome boſoms where there is no hope, *there* is no *love*, ſo Melcourt's paſſion turned ſhortly to reſentment. He ſoon execrated the hour he firſt beheld the two Engliſh beauties; and ſecretly reſolved, if poſſible, to revenge his unrequited

quited paſſion.—With thoſe ſentiments, after waiting a few moments, vainly expecting her return, he repaired to his own lodgings.

Maria found Mr. Evans ſtill locked in the arms of Morpheus. She ſoftly cloſed the door, and retired to the adjoining apartment, where ſhe ſat meditating on the recent occurrence, near the window, which commanded a view over the market-place.—There, in ſad and ſorrowing retroſpection, ſhe obſerved a chaiſe drive into the yard; the perſon who occupied it precipitately alighted, and called for the maſter of the inn: ſhortly afterwards a ſervant informed Miſs Evington that a young Lady requeſted admittance; Maria deſired the man to ſhow her into the parlour—while ſhe collected herſelf—and forming various conjectures who it could poſſibly be, went down to welcome the ſtranger. "Behold," ſaid the young woman, "a miſerable girl, who in deſpair

now

now throws herſelf on your generoſity. Alas! madam, he has not a heart to beſtow: he is betrothed to me by the moſt inviolable and ſacred promiſes—believe him not, falſe betrayer!—deceitful Melcourt!"

"Do I thus meet," replied Maria, "Adeline de Choiſeul? Compoſe yourſelf, madam, your fears are erroneous."

"Forgive me, Miſs Evington, no doubt you think me frantic: I perceive your ſurprize is mingled with indignation at my conduct; but, alas! you know not, I hope, the pangs of unrequited love, of broken vows, of ingratitude, of deceit, added indeed to robbery!"

"You alarm me," cried Maria, who now ſcarcely breathed, ſo much ſhe trembled on hearing a confirmation of Melcourt's character, as the betrayer of innocence, the friend of deceit, the child of iniquity.—She felt alſo that perhaps ſhe had herſelf been the cauſe of Adeline's deſpair, as unqueſtionably ſhe was her

her rival. Maria heaved a deep-drawn ſigh, while ſhe gazed on the weeping Adeline, whoſe tears ſeemed almoſt to reproach her for this ſilence. At laſt Adeline aroſe with wild, yet penetrating looks of deſpair, graſped her hand, and ſtarted as if from the gulph of deſtruction, ſcreaming aloud, "Tis not to be borne!"—Notwithſtanding every effort to ſpeak, Maria could not utter a ſyllable, from the numerous contending paſſions of her mind;—ſhe took Adeline's other hand, preſſed it, and offered her a chair; at length, making an exertion even againſt nature, ſhe exclaimed—"Hear me, Mademoiſelle de Choiſeul!"—but again her voice failed, Adeline had now leaned her head, ſupported by her hands, on the table. A little recovered from her agitation—"Hear you, Miſs Evington, will you then condeſcend to ſpeak to an unhappy woman, whoſe ſole ambition is to rob you of a heart, that was once her own?—a heart ſhe holds more

dear

dear than life.—All earthly comfort without that heart is but empty ſhow!"

"Indeed," reſponded Maria, "you are miſinformed, "Mr. Melcourt once certainly had given me to underſtand his heart diſengaged; however, ſuffer me to aſſure you, my amiable friend, that at preſent not the ſmalleſt intercourſe ſubſiſts between us; and I hope your tenderneſs for him may be requited by his returning affection."

"Amiable goodneſs! can this be poſſible, when ſo recently I learnt from indiſputable authority that you were on the eve of matrimony with Melcourt?"

"True; but reports, if they have only a ſmall ſtem to catch at, are generally magnified into numberleſs branches, till the original tree is at length overpowered by its falſe boughs. Since, then, you have ſo far entruſted me with your confidence, allow me to elucidate the remainder."

Maria delicately forbore mentioning the leaſt intimation that might prove to Melcourt's diſadvantage, ſeeing that Adeline poſſeſſed even ſtronger affection for him than ſhe once had done herſelf.

Adeline gratefully acknowledged her kindneſs, and in return related what had paſſed between her and Melcourt, previous to his engagement with Miſs Evington.—" Melcourt," ſhe proceeded, " not a very long time ſince, by his engaging addreſs, and converſation, gained an entire aſcendency over my heart: ſeveral months elapſed in mutual proffers of attachment, at the expiration of which, he openly avowed his paſſion, in the ſtrongeſt terms of ſincerity, and received my return of affection, with a rapture not to be deſcribed if not felt. I was then with my brother, the ſame good brother, who, when I had the pleaſure of ſeeing Miſs Evans, lay dangerouſly ill at Amſterdam; before which Mr. Melcourt frequented

our

houſe, and imparted his intentions to my brother: after this time he became a conſtant viſitor; the companion of all my pleaſures, the alleviator of all my grief, on account of my ſiſter's deranged affairs; his attention, his unremitting proofs, and repeated proteſtations of regard, compenſated for every other uneaſineſs."—The recollection that thoſe feelings were yet ſenſitively alive, almoſt prevented her continuing. "Mr. Melcourt was often diſappointed," reſumed Adeline, "in his remittances; wherefore my brother frequently aſſiſted him in pecuniary matters; but as he was not himſelf overburthened with caſh, he could not always accede to his requeſts, though in various loans, he received above two hundred pounds.—Motives of too refined delicacy prevented my brother from aſking for a written acknowledgment; ſatisfied that Melcourt's principles of honour would render ſuch a precaution unneceſſary.—My poor brother, my dear Vivien,

Vivien, died! The debt, with his private affairs, remained unſettled, and my ſmall income was barely ſufficient to ſupport me.—Melcourt, no doubt, from the peculiarity of my ſituation, forbore his viſits, yet we correſponded for a while; at length his letters, whether from accident or not, ceaſed entirely. I heard an incoherent report of his having formed another attachment, with a Miſs Evans; another ſucceeded, affirming that it was yourſelf, madam; I concluded the whole to be erroneous, until I was at laſt driven to deſpair, by a perſon on whoſe friendſhip I might rely, and who aſſured me he was on the verge of matrimony with an Engliſh lady.—Alas! madam, when I recapitulated to myſelf his innumerable vows of fidelity, I miſtruſted even my own faculties: however, deſirous of learning the truth perſonally, I reſolved to ſee you."—She ſtopped, eagerly ſearching in the melting eyes of Maria an anſwer. Alas! ſhe little thought

thought that ſince her brother's death Melcourt never intended fulfilling the promiſes, or to notice the debt for which he knew there was no voucher. She only beheld him arrayed in Hymen's fetters, ſporting with his arrows, and fancied them all blunted againſt the tower of love.—*She* ſtill beheld him at her feet, kiſſing her hands, with vows of conſtancy; while *he* ſcarcely remembered ſuch a perſon exiſted as Adeline de Choiſeul.

Maria aſſured her, that ſhe might reſt ſatisfied reſpecting any rivalſhip exiſting at preſent between them; "on the contrary," added ſhe, "tell me your wiſhes; if I can be of any ſervice command me: however, I think Miſs de Choiſeul had better abide by more experienced advice than mine. Suffer me to impart ſome of theſe circumſtances to my family, who will participate your grievances, and by their counſels, I truſt, alleviate your ſorrows. I am ſorry, *very*

ſorry

ſorry to be unable to tranſact any perſonal buſineſs with Mr. Melcourt, between whom and myſelf, I ſolemnly promiſe you, no further intercourſe will ever ſubſiſt.—I truſt to-morrow morning will find you more compoſed: may that providence, on whom we all rely, reſtore you to health and happineſs!"—Adeline's tears expreſſed her acknowledgments. She tenderly embraced Maria, who offered not to detain her, and they bade each other a ſorrowing farewel.

Miſs Evington being then ſummoned to Mr. Evans' room, received his reproaches for her abſence, adding in a jocoſe manner, "Old men muſt ſubmit to theſe deſertions, by the fair ſex—Is it not ſo? hah, hah, hah!"—Engaged in placing the men of the cheſs-board, he perceived not Maria's agitated countenance; and, unacquainted with the tumult in her mind, he continued to rally her tardineſs, while *ſhe* pondered over the recent ſcene with her

her dismissed lover, and silently recapitulated what had passed. Melcourt's entreaties to offer a vindication, and the positive denial she gave him, renewed themselves to her imagination, and she began to think her answers were replete with bitterness, with ungenerous contempt. Then again Prudence whispered that *her* dictates ought to be consulted on such an occasion; and Reason, combating with love, bore the palm of victory. Maria scarce knew whether to envy or pity the unfortunate Adeline.—"Would she not be restored to Melcourt?—most probably—nay, certainly." Here thought seemed at a pause;—till roused by Melcourt's neglect of the beautiful Adeline de Choiseul; his ingratitude to her brother; and the sudden transition of his affections, from one object to another, all combined to excite her to pity, rather than to envy Adeline. During these several evolutions of thought, she paid little or no attention

to

to the game in which ſhe was engaged with Mr. Evans, who began to obſerve ſhe was abſent, and minded not her play. Maria apologized, made frivolous excuſes, and promiſed, without effecting amendment. Mr. Evans at length grew peeviſh with her repeated miſtakes, even ſometimes to anger, proteſting that ſhe moved her men wrong purpoſely to vex him.—Unable to hear this accuſation at the time her heart was almoſt ſinking with its own ſorrows, ſhe burſt into a flood of tears. Mr. Evans, attributing this to his aſperity, now earneſtly beſought her forgiveneſs; and by the kindeſt expreſſions, endeavoured to atone for his ſeeming ill-humour. His endeavours were not unſucceſsful: Maria, in her turn, accuſed herſelf of iraſcibility, and of weakneſs; but aſſured him ſomething more intereſting, ſomething more trying to her ſpirits, occaſioned this ſudden overflowing of her heart; and what he ſhould learn the next day.

The good invalid thought he perceived an unuſual heavineſs hang upon her ſpirits; but as he knew ſhe laboured under a recent diſappointment, he had taken no further notice of her dejection than by endeavouring to diſperſe it. The cheſs-board was laid aſide, and cards brought in lieu; while Mr. Evans, willing to repair his former miſtake, enlivened the game by a thouſand little ſallies of wit and pleaſantry, until the arrival of Mrs. Evington's carriage announced their much-wiſhed return.—Mrs. Evington embraced Maria, and with the ſearching eye of maternal tenderneſs and anxiety, immediately diſcovered ſomething had made her weep. She ſmilingly diſowned the accuſation, and made a few ſtrained enquiries after the evening's amuſement, the anſwers to which were heeded ſo little by herſelf, that the next morning ſhe had forgot all that had paſſed on the occaſion.

Captain

Captain Oſnaburgh being invited to ſupper, Maria ſtole from the apartment, and retired to her own chamber, from whence ſhe ſent a ſcrap to the party, apologizing for the intruſion of a ſick head-ache, which compelled her to appear very rude, by abruptly quitting their ſociety that night.

CHAPTER IV.

" The ſoul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light thro' chinks which time has made,
Leaving the old both worlds at once we view,
Who ſtand upon the threſhold of the new.—"

WALLER.

THE next morning Miſs Evington found a letter from Adeline.

" Madam,

" Since your candid confeſſion that all connection betwixt you and Mr. Melcourt has ceaſed, I am perfectly ſatisfied, though I cannot but regard you as my rival; but your inimitable goodneſs ſoftens the feelings which a rival, in any other woman, would create in my ungovernable breaſt.—Nevertheleſs, I here ſolemnly declare, that I will give my ſacred promiſe to you, or to Melcourt, never

never to moleſt either of you in any manner verbally, perſonally, or by writing, provided I am convinced that an union with you, madam, would render *him* happy. So entirely is my ſoul enwrapped in him, that I would endure every evil for his ſake, inaſmuch as deprived of him, every comfort is baniſhed from his once beloved Adeline.—Ere this reaches you, my dear madam, I ſhall be on my return home. Should you have any thing to communicate, pleaſe to addreſs your letter at the poſt-office, Bruges, until called for by your much obliged,

" humble ſervant,

" ADELINE DE CHOISEUL."

Maria could not help feeling a ſecret pleaſure that Adeline had left Bruſſels; for however ſhe might feel for her ſuffering wrongs, ſhe knew Melcourt would be unlikely to liſten to any thing ſhe could advance in her favour, under the

ſmart of a contemptuous refuſal; well aware that whatever ſentiments a man may entertain, he can ill brook a repulſe of ſuch a nature from any woman; and that he moſt probably would revenge it, where he knew his power unconſtrained. So fully did this perſuaſion haunt her imagination, that ſhe felt an irreſiſtible inclination once again to ſee him, merely if poſſible to re-inſtate Adeline in his affections. In this dilemma, Matilda Evans found her with the letter in her hand.

"How opportunely comes my dear friend!" Maria riſing to meet her, "I have ſuch a budget to unfold, the contents of which require all your advice."

Matilda, with her uſual complacency, liſtened, ſoothed, condemned and approved as ſhe heard the trials her friend had experienced with Melcourt and Miſs de Choiſeul, and promiſed accordingly to

inform

inform Mrs. Evington and Mrs. Munſter of what had paſſed with her unexpected viſitors.—" However, my dear girl," continued Matilda, " noble as your motive is, let me diſſuade you from expoſtulating with Melcourt on that or any other ſubject: for ah! Maria, you know not the taſk you would impoſe on yourſelf, to confront the perſon you once tenderly loved, ſtill vowing fidelity to you while you are pleading for another: indeed I fear your ſpirits are unequal to this conflict."

" Certainly I do," rejoined Maria, " anticipate the ſtruggle, with all its force; but I think the conviction that I may promote another perſon's happineſs, at the expence of a few moments' pain to myſelf, will enable me to ſupport the meeting with becoming fortitude."

Matilda ſtill argued againſt the inefficacy of her reſolution, but Maria ſeemed ſo bent on putting her intention

into practice, that ſhe at length conſented to make a third perſon in the interview.—Doubtful of Mrs. Evington's concurrence, it was agreed they ſhould avail themſelves of her abſence. An opportunity offered the next day. Peter was diſpatched with a meſſage, and Melcourt flew on the wings of rapture, foreboding nothing leſs than a perfect reconciliation; priding himſelf on his irreſiſtible power, and exulting that the haughty Engliſh beauty would be forced to ſolicit the reſtoration of her own happineſs. This ſuppoſition determined him to arrogate his innocence, and he entered with conſequential dignity. At the *once* charming ſound of his well-known voice Maria turned pale; her heart beat faſt, and ſhe feared ſhe was indeed unequal to the undertaking: but Adeline, forſaken, miſerable, and diſtracted, aſſailed her memory, and inſpired her with courage.

" Your

"Your commands, ladies," ſaid Melcourt, as he approached, "were ever a law to me; your wiſhes are my mandates, and your frowns my greateſt puniſhment"—ſmiling at the ſame time to ſhew his beautiful white teeth.—In truth he had ſpared no attention to render his fine perſon unuſually attractive.

Maria kept her eyes fixed on the ground, and prepared to reply, but her voice failed her. Matilda perceived her agitation, and, to prevent Melcourt's obſerving her embarraſſment, with majeſtic confidence replied, "A circumſtance, Mr. Melcourt, of a very ſerious nature, induced my friend and me to requeſt this painful interview—the injuries, ſir, ſuſtained by a woman your honour binds you to love, whatever your inclination may ſuggeſt to the contrary."

Melcourt, who little ſuſpected ſhe alluded to Adeline de Choiſeul, rejoined

with equal gravity, "My honour, madam, is inviolable, and I am ready to give you or your lovely companion any proofs you may require."

Maria, ſomewhat recovered, added, "And will you, ſir, abide by and repeat thoſe words."—"By the eternal heavens! by the honour of a man, by *my* honour and word, I will."

"Beware, Mr. Melcourt, you are not precipitate—conſider, ſir, the force of your expreſſions," ſaid Matilda. "Madam, where my honour is engaged, there wants no ſecondary conſideration."

Maria trembled, yet ſummoned reſolution to proceed; with a penetrating look, though with faultering accents, ſhe returned, "Then, Mr. Melcourt, repair the wrongs, the diſhonourable wrongs, you have given the faithful poſſeſſor of your plighted honour."

Melcourt wholly engroſſed by the affection

fection he knew Maria formerly bore him, even before he had avowed his own, Adeline being leagues from his mind, and as he imagined unknown to Maria, expected every moment it was to repair some trifling neglect, Maria might have received from him; again he protested that where it was plighted it should live and die.

"On *that* condition," continued Maria, with firmness, her cheeks flushed with the agitation of her mind, "I will forgive you offering me a heart and hand, which with sacred vows were betrothed to another.—On *that* condition, only, sir, and provided you recompense Miss Adeline de Choiseul, do I condescend to see a man I hesitate not to say, I once esteemed, although I now blush to own he was utterly unworthy of my preference."

At the name of Adeline, Melcourt changed colour, and scarce knew which way to hide his confusion; while inno-

cènce ſtrengthened Maria's voice as ſhe continued, conſcious guilt ſtruck Melcourt ſilent: he endeavoured to reply, but ſtammered out ſome ſyllables ſo inarticulately, that neither Matilda nor Miſs Evington could underſtand his meaning.

"Now recollect, Mr. Melcourt," ſaid Matilda, fixing his diſordered countenance, "where your honour lies; retrieve it, ſir, by firſt aſking Miſs Evington's pardon, which will be eaſily obtained, and acting conformably to your words towards Mademoiſelle de Choiſeul."

Melcourt thought it more to his advantage, at preſent, to appear acquiefcent, whatever he might do hereafter.—Riſing from his chair, he turned to Maria, and exclaimed with ſome aſperity, "When I poſſeſſed Miſs Evington's heart I would have relinquiſhed every other attachment, dear as they might be, to promote

mote her wiſhes.—Now *ſhe* pleads in favour of another, I ſhall with honour and pleaſure make her rival the *happy woman.*" Then bowing to each, he haſtily left the room.

" Vain, conceited creature!" cried Maria—" If I have, however, ſerved that rival, I mind not thy ſharp pointed revenge.—My ſoul is no longer to be touched by Melcourt !"

Matilda, apprehending he would have endeavoured to work upon her feelings, now conſoled Maria by evincing the ſuperiority there was between them, and the poſſible good that might ariſe from a conduct ſo prudent and determined.—At this moment a carriage covered with the mire of the roads, attracted Matilda's attention as it drove acroſs the market-place, and turned into the Hotel de *Belle Vue*—the gladſome ſound of "*My maſter!*—my maſter!" caught their ears.—Matilda haſtily

haſtily opened the door to hear the confirmation of the words ſhe diſtinguiſhed, when Mr. Evington's voice rouſed Maria from her ſeat; forgetful of all other care, ſhe flew to her father's arms, and in a tranſport of joy, hung upon his fond paternal boſom, exclaiming, "O! my father! my dear father!"

Mr. Evington anxiouſly enquired for his wife, who was then out. The effuſion of reciprocal affection ſubſided; they repaired to Mr. Evans' apartment, where the beſt of wives, the tendereſt of mothers, and the ſincereſt of friends, ſhortly afterwards joined them.—"And now," ſaid Mrs. Evington, "tell me where is my Oſmond, my dear boy?—ſince we parted, as I wrote to you, we have had letters."

"I know it," rejoined Mr. Evington; "ſurely there never was a man ſo croſſed in his purſuits as I have been ſince I left you; and I am at laſt returned without having

having ſeen our ſon.—After a good paſſage, I arrived at Brighthelmſtone, intending to haſten to London: it was late in the evening, and I met with my old friend Mr. Yoxford: we agreed to ſup together: he informed me he had juſt left our ſon at Portſmouth, recovered from a fever, and a broken arm; and that a young ſea officer had attended him with all the aſſiduity of an affectionate brother.—I departed without delay next morning for Portſmouth; here I was informed he had ſome days ſince ſet off for London: being much fatigued, I found myſelf obliged to remain there two days. —Mr. Hamilton had alſo ſailed, and though it gave me pleaſure to hear Oſmond ſpoken of with many eulogiums, I felt extremely vexed to have journeyed ſo many miles out of my way.—I then poſted to London, where doubtleſs you know I found our beloved Emma had bleſt me with a ſweet little grand-child: but

but my pleaſure was much damped by learning that this boy of ours was again returned to Portſmouth. I wrote to him, and impatiently waited his anſwer: at length wearied that none came, and really very angry, I returned to Portſmouth, where, to complete my vexations and unſucceſsful chace, I found he had embarked with his regiment, which had ſet ſail.—I confeſs I was moſt cruelly diſappointed. After refreſhing my hurried ſpirits, I went to ſurvey our houſe at Ivy Bridge, and ſee how our workmen went on there. I again heard of our ſon, and a ſtrange train of incidents which had taken place, all of which are too long to relate at preſent. From thence I ſet off to Brighthelmſtone, and embarked, after being detained two days by contrary winds."

"Then our ſon has indeed purchaſed a commiſſion," rejoined Mrs. Evington: "Ah! ſhould my child meet with any accident!

accident! Oh! my Oſmond! my dear ſon! why plunge yourſelf in danger, and your family into anxiety!"

"I find he has drawn for a pretty handſome ſum upon me: however, I'm determined to proteſt his notes," ſaid Mr. Evington; for I never was ſo much diſpleaſed with him before.—What, does he think that I am to be looked upon merely as his banker?—A tool? while he is to ſquander away, with or without my leave, thouſands!—No, no, ſir!—you have had your way, now I'll have mine.—So I have given poſitive orders not to accept his drafts."

The tender mother and ſiſter pleaded with all the energy of affection, in the offending ſon's behalf; they gave the letters he had written to him during his abſence, which not only urged his pardon, but ſuggeſted many powerful reaſons for his apparent temerity. Yet even they were unſucceſsful. Forgive him he would,

would, ſince there were many points in theſe letters that accounted for his conduct, and claimed his pity; but he obſerved, "This youth merits ſome puniſhment to rectify that unconquerable haſtineſs in his temper, for which reaſon the drafts ſhall be proteſted, whatever I may do hereafter."

Mr. Evington ſeldom poſitively advanced any thing unleſs he had ſufficient reaſon for ſo doing. Fifteen hundred pounds he knew to be infinitely more than requiſite to purchaſe a commiſſion; and as he allowed his ſon a very handſome income, he could not deviſe the utility of drawing ſo largely upon him, unleſs it were to indulge in extravagances; therefore he determined to frighten him, though he ſecretly intended to pay the money; which reſolution once fixed, neither Matilda's ſoft perſuaſions, Mr. Evans' interceſſion, Mrs. Munſter's ſolicitations, the mother's or

ſiſter's

ſiſter's prayers, could remove.—Not that Mr. Evans was much better pleaſed with Oſmond, from whom he expected ere now, to have had a letter, in anſwer to that he wrote previous to his apoplectic fit. But Matilda requeſted it as the greateſt of all favours, that her father would keep this letter a ſecret from the family; and in compliance to her wiſhes, impoſed this ſilence on himſelf; which perhaps he would not have effected ſo well, had not his daughter with great truth proved to him, by Mr. Evington's account, that his letter, among others, had miſcarried, and lay either at the General poſt-office in London, or at Plymouth, from whence they determined to have it back.

Mr. Evington being diſappointed in this his favourite and long predeſtined union, looked ſomewhat coolly on the Evans's; and though from Mr. Evans' bad ſtate of health, he avoided mentioning

ing the ſubject to him, it preyed upon his ſpirits; but his own daughter now called forth all his attention, on whoſe account we leave him buſily occupied correſponding with Mr. Varennes, and ſeeking Melcourt.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.

Three times he reads, as oft he reads again
The cruel lines, as oft he ſtrives in vain
To give each ſenſe the lye, and fondly tries
To diſbelieve the witneſs of his eyes.

ORLANDO FURIOSO,
Mr. HOOLE.

MEANTIME we will enquire where Neptune has landed our young ſon of Mars——At Helvoetſluice, with his company, much fatigued, by a long and tedious paſſage, and after a chace of twelve hours to eſcape the enemy. Here then, at the ſign of the Prince of Orange, kept by Mr. Bridges, we find him refreſhed with good cheer, and good accommodation; he is preparing to march for Bergen-op-zoom, and to join the Duke of York's army.

The

The cleanlineſs and uncommon neatneſs of this ſea-port town pleaſed young Evington exceedingly; although, excluſive of the admiralty on the right as you enter the harbour, there is not a good building to attract the eye, yet the inferior ones are kept in ſuch excellent condition, that they have rather the appearance of paintings with moving figures, than habitations of brick and mortar. The Dutch are particularly fond of decorating their houſes with coloured ornaments, as green, red, blue, or yellow, benches and window ſhutters; nay, even the bricks of their houſes are frequently painted yellow or red, picked out with white, which diverſifies the ſcene, and gives theſe ſmall towns a very lively appearance *. Oſmond was alſo much

* The peculiar neatneſs of the Dutch womens' apparel particularly attracted Oſmond's notice; the Dutch cap, being very ſmall, only juſt covers the head, with a plain border, uſually edged with a ſilk worm, ſimilar

much pleaſed with many of their pretty faces, though he inſiſted there appeared to

ſimilar to that worn by Liſette *(See Vol. II.)*, who was born of Engliſh parents in Holland, and brought up there. The common people wear their petticoats of brocade and ſtriped callimanco, or of a thick woollen ſtuff; a long jacket of another colour, that reſembles a ſhort ſack, which meets before, and ſits cloſe to the waiſt, having long ſleeves buttoned up nearly to the elbow. They have generally large hips, and ſuch as have them not wear falſe ones. Their feet and legs in every claſs are always neat, it being almoſt impoſſible to ſee a Dutch girl, even of the loweſt extraction, with holes in her ſtockings, which, from their very ſhort petticoats, with no quarters to their ſlippers, would be conſpicuous to every obſerver were they leſs careful. The hats worn by the lower claſs are immenſely large; the brim being near half a yard deep, the crown not two inches high, and in the exact ſhape of a ſhaving diſh: they are made of thick ſtraw, very heavy and very clumſy, are lined with chintz of large ſhowy patterns, equally ugly, very coarſe, and very highly glazed; from the termination of the brim behind, on each ſide where it is curved in for the convenience of the head, are faſtened two long ribbons about a yard each, which hang flying

to be no young females, as they ſeemed in general either quite girls, or old women.

flying in the air; and it is a fact that they are never tied, but ſeem of no other uſe than as ſtreamers to inform paſſengers which way the wind blows. They ſeldom wear a cloak, and when they do, it is a plain long black ſcarf. When they receive the communion, they are always dreſſed in black, and their heads covered with a black hood, without hats or bonnets. The very pooreſt market-woman generally amaſſes ſufficient money to purchaſe a red bead or coral necklace, of which they are very fond, and deem it a requiſite part of their wardrobe: every baſket-woman, fiſh-woman, or ſervant, has one of theſe necklaces, which though to appearance are of no value, coſt from fifteen ſhillings to three, four, and five guineas each. The next ornament they afford themſelves is the head for a purſe of maſſy ſilver, wrought in various patterns, and which never come to leſs than fifteen, twenty, or thirty guelders *: they are from ten to five inches long, and claſp together: from this ſuſpends the purſe, or more properly a money bag, ſewn upon the ſilver claſps, which are large enough to admit the two hands, if requiſite, though they were of Herculanean ſize: a Dutch houſewife would ſooner live on potatoes the year round than be without theſe

* A guelder is twenty pence.

two

men. "It has been frequently remarked that the beauty of a married woman in Holland, after two or three and twenty, fades more conſpicuouſly than does the full blown roſe after a pelting ſhower," ſaid a gentleman who had reſided many years on the continent; for my part, I compare their beauty to the convolvolus major: no ſooner does it expand its radiant charms, than it droops, and is gone ere the eye can ſufficiently admire its perfection. However, Mr. Evington," continued the gentleman, "as I preſume you have no inclination to ſelect for yourſelf a wife among theſe Dutch *vrows* and *juffrows*; or if you have, only ſoar a little higher, and you will find nearly as choice a ſelection of fair beauties at the Hague, differing ſo little from our fairer country women in dreſs and perſons, that

two articles. But, for a more accurate and juſt deſcription of the manners and cuſtoms of the Dutch, we refer to PRATT's "*Gleanings through Holland and Weſtphalia.*"

your heart may be expoſed to ſome danger; and they can bring with them that charm of all charms, the ready *gelt:* tons of which are frequently carefully reſerved for their marriage portion."

Oſmond jocoſely promiſed the ſtranger he ſhould look out for a rich heireſs, being much in want of a wife.—After ſome converſation they ſeparated; Oſmond to join the main body of the Engliſh troops at *Bois-le-duc.*

* * * * * *

Young Evington lodged in a houſe in which were ſeveral children, belonging to the hoſteſs, whoſe civility to Oſmond induced him frequently to bring the little ones home ſome trifling remembrance of toys, cakes, or fruit.—That day he ſtopped to purchaſe a ſet of nine-pins, for one of the boys, a pair of ſciſſars and a ſilver thimble for the little girl: having ordered the boys preſent to be ſent home,

he

he put the ſciſſars and thimble in his pocket. On his return he called the little girl to him.—Henriette obeyed: "Now," ſaid he, "as you are an excellent little ſempſtreſs, here is ſomething for you."—Henriette received the parcel, curtſied, and ran to her mama to inveſtigate its contents, which were enveloped in a piece of writing-paper.—"There," ſaid the mother, nearly as pleaſed with the gift as was the child, "ſee, Henriette, what it is to be diligent and good; but here is ſomething written on this paper; take it to the good Mr. Evington, and beg him to explain it; tell him that although you hope to ſpeak Engliſh very ſoon, you cannot underſtand as much as is here written." Henriette carried the paper to Oſmond, who knew not that it contained any writing, and replied in French, he feared he could not interpret it ſo well as herſelf, ſince it muſt certainly be Dutch, having received it from a Dutch woman: "Indeed, ſir, it is nei-

ther Dutch, German, nor French."—Ofmond then negligently approached the candle to peruſe the fragment, when, to his incredible ſurprize, he recognized the dear and ever beloved hand-writing of *Matilda!*—"Good God! is it poſſible? —Matilda's hand-writing in Holland!—thrown about a *toy-ſhop!*"—He now began to read it, but to his infinite mortification, he found it had been torn in half: which half he made out with much trouble inaccurately, as follows, from being effaced in the folds:

moments have paſſed
when ſummer ſurrounds
fruits deck the terreſtial
we regard them with
come ſo accuſtomed to
bituated to their grateful
vain creatures as we are
pon them as natural and
ſible to their real value
utumnal tinge reminds
then

then and then only awakened
ſion we look back with
our ſenſe of the enjoyment
ed ſo long dormant and we
. . . . .
ruits from the hot-houſe the
from the nurſery . .
. . . . .
Affection to riſe to its actual
You are . . . to me
I heſitate not to confeſs in
. . . . .
eſteem you above all men
purer ſpring than mine
. . . . think I feel
I bear your family equals
high veneration and praiſe
apprehend my heart
ſex than yourſelf

innocence arrayed
gether ſought the ſhade
viewed the gaudy fly
enſnared it but to die

happineſs and love
bids me rove
o the taſk declares
reſpite from all cares;

concluſion or think any
Melcourt's favour than
neſs juſtifies.
ted with my heart, which
a livelier paſſion
Oſmond, to wholly reject
ſhe eſteems above
ity of his ſex.

The ſenſe of theſe lines being completely deſtroyed, he gazed on the fragment with inexpreſſible regret, and conſtrued the torn ſentences, as addreſſed to ſome favourite.—Henriette, ſurprized at his emotions, queſtioned him repeatedly to interpret the cauſe; at laſt, ſomewhat awakened by her importunity, he aſſured her it was inexplicable, and quitted the room abruptly.—"Ah! Matilda! then I

am

am not deceived—this paper tells me so, and Melcourt is your happy chosen—Yet, how can it be? has he not addressed my sister?—Hypocrite! what, what can it mean? This writing is surely her's—evidently her's—and visibly to him." Thoughts now indiscriminately crowded one upon another, till Osmond reached the toy-shop, where, by signs, he enquired, as well as he could, how they came by that piece of paper. The people not understanding English, nor comprehending his signs, could not for some length of time divine his meaning; but supposing that he wanted writing-paper, obligingly sent out for some, and with marks of pleasure presented it to him. Osmond meanwhile imagined they so well comprehended his wishes, that they had sent for the other half, waited with impatience the messenger's return, still expressing himself by signs of approbation, highly obliged, until he had the mortification to find out his er-

ror. He now exhauſted every new ſign to expreſs what he wanted, but again they concluded he required pens and ink; with much urbanity and good-nature they cried, "*yaw, yaw*, mynheer!" and ſent for the ſuppoſed articles.—Oſmond began to deſpair of making himſelf underſtand: much vexed, he left the toy-ſhop in queſt of ſome perſon to interpret his queſtions more ſucceſsfully. Having found one, they returned together, to catechize in Dutch, with all poſſible ſcrutiny, the ſhop-keeper concerning this important piece of paper:—but ineffectually; for the ſhop girl declared ſhe found it on the floor; that as it looked clean enough for her purpoſe, and there being no white-brown paper at hand, ſhe had torn off a ſmall piece to enfold the articles he had purchaſed; then ſearching under the counter for the ſmall piece ſhe alluded to, found it, and gave it to Oſmond. He next enquired who had been

been n the ſhop that day. The girl, ſomewhat tired with being thus minutely called to account, and rather impatient to rejoin a favoured apprentice, in the adjacent room, pettiſhly replied, " Indeed, ſhe never kept an account of the cuſtomers that went in and out of the ſhop, whatever they might do in other countries, nor was ſhe always behind the counter." The perſon who interpreted for Oſmond, foreſaw they ſhould gain nothing by making the girl angry, who was then retiring. He endeavoured to aſſuage her by kind words, adding that the paper ſeemed of material conſequence to the Engliſhman's peace of mind :—" Ha! ha! does it then regard his miſtreſs?" queſtioned the inquiſitive girl, who was very pretty, and knew that among her male cuſtomers ſhe might give herſelf airs with impunity. The interpreter premiſing her interrogation, by aſſuring Oſmond that he only faithfully tranſlated her words, repeated them ver-

batim in French.—" Of what conſequence," replied Oſmond, " can the contents of this paper be!—ſuffice it to ſay, it eſſentially concerns my happineſs."

" Then tell the gentleman," ſaid the girl, " that as it eſſentially concerns my curioſity to learn its purport, unleſs I am acquainted with the truth, I ſhall give myſelf no farther trouble about it."

Oſmond, believing it would ſeem of more importance, rejoined that it related to pecuniary buſineſs. " Buſineſs!" exclaimed the girl, " O! then I'm ſure, I ſhall not puzzle my brain any longer: its quite enough for lawyers to ſettle ſuch matters, and it's a pity to take a good job from any body—had it been—"

" Provoking huſſey!" cried Oſmond, " ſhe perceives my anxiety, and delights to torture me: tell her upon my ſoul, it is not on buſineſs, but regards a lady I tenderly eſteem."

" I thought as much, my grave Engliſh

liſh *beer*. I had a mind to ſee, if in all countries, women have equal power.—Well, ſir, I'm ſatisfied; and as I am no ſtranger to the paſſion, though I really am to *buſineſs*, I will moſt willingly try to relieve your ſuſpenſe, under the hope that in doing as I would be done by, my crafty father will ſoon relieve mine."—She then recounted a variety of names, that ſhe recollected having been in the ſhop during the day: particularizing that there had been ſome ſoldiers for tobacco-pipes, ſome officers for tooth-picks, two for ſweet-ſcented pomatum, ſeveral for lavender-water, whoſe names ſhe knew not; there had alſo been an Engliſhman for a cork-ſcrew, whom ſhe heard a ſoldier call by the name of PEETHEER, and who moſt probably let it fall, as on recollection he was the laſt Engliſh cuſtomer in the ſhop, himſelf excepted.

This ambiguous intelligence, afforded Oſmond little conſolation: he neverthe-

leſs kindly thanked the girl, and making her a ſmall preſent, as well as to the interpreter, ſauntered from one inn to another, in hopes of diſcovering this *Peetheer*, as ſhe called him. In a ſlow pace, after a fruitleſs ſearch, he directed his courſe homewards, and had nearly arrived when a well-known voice aſſailed his ears from the other ſide of the ſtreet: the duſk of the evening prevented him ſeeing the perſon, "Who's there?" demanded Oſmond, approaching, "is either of your names *Peetheer?*" "Yes, mine, ſir," rejoined *Peter*, half recognizing his maſter's voice, yet ſcarce crediting the ſame; "may I alſo aſk your name?"—"Evington," returned Oſmond.—"Hah! my young maſter, by *jingo!*—how rejoiced I am to ſee you, ſir!"

Oſmond's heart bounded with hope and expectation, truſting that the paper had probably fallen from Peter's pocket: he bade him follow immediately. Arrived

rived at his own apartments he haſtily ordered candles, and enquired of Peter whether he knew that paper—producing the fragment.

" Why, yes, ſir, I believe it's the ſame I had in my pocket—pray where did you get it, ſir?"

" I aſk *you* that queſtion—read—tell me—how came *you* by it?"

" That's my misfortune, ſir, I never could read a line of writing in all my life. —Lord, ſir! I remember when I was quite a boy—"

" Hold!—I want you to remember, now you are a man, where, when, and how you came by this piece of paper?"

" Well, ſo I will, ſir; but when I was about ten years old, my mother——"

" I tell you, anſwer my plain queſtion—don't you hear me?—don't you underſtand me?"

" O, yes, ſir, I hear you, if I didn't 'tis not your fault, ſir, and am going to tell you

you as faſt as I can—but you won't have any patience; as I was juſt going to explain how I came not to write, and—how—"

"Plague on your nonſenſe! this moment anſwer my queſtion."—

"How I got that there piece of paper, ſir?"

"Zounds! *yes*, ſir—am I to repeat my words an hundred times over?"

"I beg pardon, ſir; but it's a great while ſince I found it, ſir—when we were at that great houſe—Mr. — Mr. *Forrainſit*—I believe's the name."

"And where did you find it there, ſir?"

"I'faith, ſir, it is ſo long ago, that it's ten to one I remember where—O! now I think on't, I do, ſir—I do—yes, yes, I've a pretty good memory ſometimes: 'tis a very fortunate thing for a ſervant to have a good memory, is it not, ſir?—well now to the point; one day after dinner, as I was helping to lay the ſupper-cloth, I

ſaw

ſaw a clean piece of paper lie on the ground; ſo I puts it in my pocket, not thinking of nothing at all, and forgets that it was there for an age."

"How came it torn? did you tear it?"

"To be ſure I did, ſir."

"When?—where?—for what?—and for whom?—how long ſince?"

"Lord, ſir, you axes ſo many queſtions at once: to begin, then—juſt before we left Mr. *For-rainſit*—"

"Who did you give it to?"

"Why that, ſir, is rather an odd queſtion to aſk a body—I gave it to ſome body—ſir."

"Fool! I aſk you to whom?"

"To—to—ſir—why it can't ſignify to whom, ſir: does it, ſir?"

"It does materially ſignify, and know I muſt."

"Why if you muſt, you muſt, ſir; and there's no mincing the matter—I took half of it to put a ſilver-edged ribbon in,

which

which I gave *Ma'amſelle Jolymain*, Mrs. *For-rainſit*'s upper maid, you know, ſir."

"Who?—oh! Mademoiſelle *Jolimains*, you mean; very well: then you muſt poſt off to-morrow morning to Bruges, and get the other half, by ſome means or other; for I cannot reſt without it—What buſineſs had you to put any written piece of paper in your pocket?"

Peter ſubmiſſively implored forgiveneſs, promiſing never again to be guilty of the like offence, and to bring the other half if it were to be found above ground.

Oſmond now enquired when and why he left Mr. Evington, with many queſtions concerning the family and Matilda: "Have you no letters from my ſiſter? my mother?—None—from any body? none from .... from any body?"

"No, ſir—didn't I tell you that I left my place becauſe Mr. Melcourt ſaid I affronted

affronted him, and behaved impertinent juſt after my maſter went to London? ſo here I am prowling about, like a fiſh out of water: as to that, I know Mr. Melcourt was only afraid I ſhould tell my young miſtreſs, that another lady had more of his company than ſhe had; but that's nothing to me, you know, ſir; if a lady's content, 'tis not for us ſervants to open their eyes, and make miſchief—'tis not for us to tell what our maſters or other ſervants' maſters do. I'faith, if that were the caſe, there isn't a ſervant in all Chriſtendom that would be likely to keep his place long—No, no, ſir, waiting-women and footmen know when to be ſilent, I promiſe you.—Now, for inſtance, there's *Ma'amſelle Jolymain*, I'll bet—"

"Enough! enough! my good fellow," ſaid Oſmond, who had inattentively permitted the man to proceed, "I ſhall write to my mother, and, if ſhe diſapproves it not, you ſhall go with me this campaign; meanwhile

while do you diſpatch my orders, and bring me the other half of the letter."

Oſmond having re-peruſed the fragment many times, began to entertain ſome hopes, that the ſcrap might have been intended for him: under this belief, he ſent to Peter to meet him at Bruſſels, whither he determined to go, if he could get leave of abſence for a few days; and if it was not, to puniſh Melcourt's duplicity; to effect which, he perſonally applied to his colonel, who aſſented to his departure early the following week, for ten days. Oſmond accordingly wrote to his mother to expect him, and arrived at Bruſſels at the time appointed.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

" He jeſts at ſcars that never felt a wound."

SHAKSPEARE.

THE joy of this family re-union, ſo much wiſhed, and yet ſo unexpected, would have been unalloyed by pain, had not Mr. Evington's brow pourtrayed marks of diſpleaſure; nor did Matilda's behaviour correſpond with the demonſtrations of her fluſhed cheek, or with the irrefragable proofs ſparkling in her eye—proofs which at firſt gave Oſmond the higheſt ſatisfaction; and even made him in an inſtant forget every former reſolution that tended to ſeparate their felicity, or ſever them from each other: he now only remembered his affection, and the means to obtain her's. This ebullition of fancy ſoon vaniſhed, by the pointed reſerve, and degree of ſcepticiſm

ticiſm in her *manner* whenever compelled to addreſs him, that the pleaſing proſpect hope pointed to, was again overſhaded by an impenetrable gloom.

Mr. Evans being aſſured by Oſmond that no letter had reached him, regretted the delay, but waited a more private opportunity to reveal its purport; till when, he ſhewed him the utmoſt kindneſs.

The following day Oſmond and Matilda found themſelves together without the preſence of a third perſon. He now determined to put his fate again to the teſt. Taking her trembling hand, he ſaid, in a voice ſcarcely audible, ſo greatly was he agitated—"Matilda! dear Matilda! will you hear me for once and all? To ſee you, beloved of my heart, I am come even at the riſk of your diſpleaſure: tell me, I conjure you, the reaſon you diſdained anſwering my laſt ſcrap?—Am I hateful to your ſight, that you ſhun me?—

me?—that you neither ſpeak nor write to me?"

"The accuſation, ſir, is unjuſt.—Your conduct, Mr. Evington, has I confeſs much ſurprized me, and cauſed me to repent the anſwer I *did* give that *ſcrap*."

"O! Matilda! addreſs me not by ſuch formal appellations. If I have offended you, by the eternal heavens, by the love I bear you, I ſwear it is unintentionally! it is unknown—nor have I received a line from you."

"Did you not, ſir, find my anſwer in the dining-parlour, the day before you left us?—have you ever written me a line during your abſence?—However, Mr. Oſmond, I upbraid you not, though your conduct myſteriouſly contradicts your words."

"If I am unworthy of your love, I am not, cruel Matilda, of your pity: in the name of mercy, explain your meaning; for I have never received the ſcrap you allude

allude to.—Ah! does Miſs Evans only ſport with my miſery?—whence have I merited this cruel treatment? Is your nature changed, Matilda, that you can calmly inflict pain, you mean not to alleviate? Inſenſible, unfeeling Matilda!"

Oſmond gazed upon her with a degree of reproachful anger, foreign to his diſpoſition; then haſtily turning from the faſcinating object of his affection, and his wrath, with a deep ſigh, threw himſelf on a chair, quite overpowered by the various emotions combating in his boſom. To believe Matilda capable of trifling with a paſſion ſhe knew irremoveable, ſtung him to the quick; he felt almoſt aſhamed of ſupplicating the woman whom he apprehended regarded his ſolicitation with diſdainful ſilence, and ſat in deep meditation.

Matilda, no longer able to conceal her ſentiments under the veil of reſerve, or hear

hear herſelf accuſed of inſenſibility, by the perſon ſhe moſt eſteemed in the world, or behold that perſon ſuffering an extreme agony of mind, renounced every previous reſolution of reſentment, and the unbidden tear gliſtened in her compaſſionating eye: her only thought was now how to ſoothe and relieve his anguiſh.

Oſmond, ſilent, his face partly concealed by his arm, which hung over the chair, prevented him obſerving this change in Matilda's countenance, which expreſſed all his heart could wiſh.—A mutual pauſe enſued.—The torn ſcrap which had fallen from Oſmond's hand, preſented itſelf to his memory, and even appeared more evidently to his imagination written to Melcourt: his lips quivered at ſo mean a rival: his averted eye rolled with indignation: "No, Matilda!" exclaimed Oſmond, "the reaſon I am thus contemned is obvious;—no, madam,

it

it wants no explanation—here lies the cauſe—thoſe lines, ere now, ought to have convinced my erring heart of the hateful truth—'tis done : I *am* convinced—and aſk pardon, Miſs Evans, for diſturbing your ſpirits by my unwelcome preſence."

Matilda looked at the paper, which he preſented, and recognized it to be the identical ſcrap. From its mutilated condition ſhe comprehended what he meant, though ſhe began to ſurmiſe ſome evil genius had intercepted it. Although her feelings were much hurt during Oſmond's laſt ſpeech, and ſhe felt inclined to leave him, for having precipitately judged from appearances, a moment's conſideration reminded her that we are all liable to very important errors, ariſing from innumerable, inconceivable, and trivial accidents, that in the end ſhe would derive more pleaſure by calmly undeceiving him, than by taking offence at what in

reality

reality aroſe from his ſtrong attachment to her. Under theſe ideas, Matilda rejoined, with revived gaiety, "This ſcrap, Mr. Evington, is appropriate, if I miſtake not, as the happy medium of our reconciliation: compoſe yourſelf; and though in truth I ought to be the offended perſon, I foreſee I ſhall have reaſon to laugh heartily, and you will own, that your whole ſex is led by a feather, and *miſled* by a ſhadow: why, thou ingrate! this is part of the very ſcrap I wrote you at Bruges, and yourſelf the favoured rival."

The aſtoniſhed and enraptured Oſmond would have thrown himſelf at her feet, but Matilda with a ſmile continued, "I will not ſtay to hear your condemnation, or ſee you perform penance.—No! while I am away, recover your ſurprize, and I will promiſe to bring your pardon." Saying which, ſhe with difficulty diſengaged her hand from Oſmond, to fetch

a copy of the ſcrap; fully ſatisfied that by ſome chance, in ſome meaſure her own fault, the ſcrap had been found by another perſon. She ſoon returned to the apartment, where, however, any further explanation was prevented by the preſence of young Hamilton, juſt arrived from Oſtend.—Nothing could have given Oſmond more pleaſure than ſeeing his friend, though he would rather it had been at any other juncture than the preſent, which kept him in a ſtate of ſuſpence: an opportunity not offering to regain the ſcrap from Matilda, Oſmond attempted to reſcue it, but ſhe pertinaciouſly refuſed leſt it might become a ſource of new miſchief.

The arrival of young Hamilton, whoſe ingratiating manners had already prepoſſeſſed the Evington family in his favour, gave additional ſpirits to the party; for perhaps the intervention of a viſitor never

never arriyes more opportunely than when a family are at caſual variance among themſelves.

Not ſo with Mr. Evans: he felt his inward ſtrength gradually impair. Having long been convaleſcent, his diſorder began to be attended with many alarming ſymptoms. He had now finally arranged his affairs, in caſe of a diſſolution, which he ſuſpected to be nearer than his phyſician allowed, who ſtill flattered him and his friends that the period was very diſtant. Yet no conſideration for himſelf induced him to forget the ties of friendſhip; and while the family circle enjoyed themſelves below, he detained Mr. Evington with him until he had perfected a complete reconciliation between the father and ſon, and prevailed on the former to ſanction thoſe ſteps which Oſmond had taken, refractory as they were to his inclinations.—Mr. Evington, then ſought his ſon; imparted Mr. Evans'

kind interference, and embraced him—"My dear boy," ſaid Mr. Evington, "I muſt yet adviſe you, that ſince our late misfortune in Devonſhire, your father is not the opulent man you had then a right to think him: I am ſorry to add, that night deſtroyed moſt of my papers, beſides the immediate loſs we ſuſtained; I am juſt apprized that Meſſieurs Guinea and Bank have failed, which failure reduces my circumſtances to a very ſlender income, comparatively ſpeaking."

"Then, ſir, I am happy the path I have choſen in the day of affluence may prove more advantageous than we expected. O! my dear ſir, to ſee you bear this reverſe of fortune thus magnanimouſly, convinces me indeed of my father's ſuperior worth; but you are ill, ſir; why do you ſhake ſo?" continued Oſmond, with tender concern, on ſeeing Mr. Evington's agitation.—"No, thank heaven, I am well: yet when I think that my ſon, my Oſmond, is ſuddenly, by the unexpected

unexpected blaſt of Providence bereft of his patrimony, his dear ſiſter of her fortune, and our houſe at once become a wreck; I cannot wholly forbear the intruding ſigh, while I reflect how tranſient are the ſmiles of proſperity."

"What is unavoidable, my dear ſir, muſt be endured; but on my account you ought to rejoice; for I have it in my power to dig fortune from the mines of valour in the field of glory. Inſtead of receiving it unmeritoriouſly from my anceſtors, let me, I conjure you, ſir, become a ſecondary object: I am ſtrong and can provide for myſelf; while Maria is weak, young, and lovely, and ſtill requires the neceſſary appendage of *fortune*, which *I* can do without. Hence, my deareſt father, for once ſwerve from the general rule of giving to the ſon every thing, forgetful that the daughters are leſs able to baffle with the frowns of fate than ourſelves.—Are my mother

and ſiſter acquainted with this circumſtance?"

"No, Oſmond, they are not, nor even of the extent of our loſſes before we left England. Indeed the ſhock my wife's ſpirits received by the fire, induced me to haſten our departure for the continent, where our expences would be leſs, and preferable to hiring a new reſidence in England.—I am ſenſible they will not repine at this unfortunate change; yet my unwilling heart is loth to communicate the unpleaſant tidings.—Nor can I purloin from my ſon, to enrich my daughter, who while I live ſhall never want thoſe comforts ſhe has been accuſtomed to partake of; although it is no longer in my power to give her as handſome a marriage portion as had her ſiſter."

"Doubtleſs, my dear ſir, you will act as your better judgment directs: however, ſuffer me to ſay, that I here ſolemnly decline receiving any pecuniary aſſiſtance

from

from you, until my ſiſter Maria is equally portioned with Lady Beaufort: then, if, without inconvenience to yourſelf and my dear mother, there is an overplus, I will accept the difference, ſatisfied that, with prudence, my pay will ſuffice to procure neceſſaries."

"Dear, generous boy!" cried Mr. Evington, with tears in his eyes, "your father would indeed be unworthy of ſuch a ſon if he could act ſo unfeelingly. Neceſſity obliges me to retract half your preſent allowance; but the one-half will be regularly at your command.—As to Maria, we will talk about her when it becomes neceſſary to lay down the money."

"Then, ſir, let my ſiſter remain ignorant of this tranſaction."

Mr. Evington conſented and withdrew, while Oſmond reflected on the unfortunate event, which perhaps gave him more pain than even his father imagined,

from three powerful reaſons: firſt, the chagrin it would indubitably cauſe his mother; next, the impoſſibility he had of repaying the worthy Mr. Orton, except by ſmall inſtalments; and laſtly came the ſevereſt of all reaſons, the impropriety of offering his hand to Matilda, with no fortune of his own to ſupport her; and this at the very moment his hopes were realizing:—theſe reflections were painful in the extreme; and though in his father's preſence he appeared cheerful, in his abſence a ſettled dejection hung upon his brow, indicating the ſevere taſk that he impoſed upon himſelf.

Matilda perceived that a ſudden depreſſion of ſpirits had overpowered her beloved friend: he appeared even uneaſy and reſtleſs in her preſence, and abſented himſelf from ſociety every opportunity. She attributed it partly to herſelf, and felt almoſt aſhamed to have, though unavoidably, prolonged her promiſe

miſe of giving up the whole ſcrap, which ſhe imagined occaſioned his diſpleaſure; finding that no opportunity to deliver it in private would probably intervene, and grieved to witneſs his dejection, ſhe determined to ſhorten his ſuſpenſe, and taking his hand, ſhe ſaid, in a whiſper, 'This is a copy of the fragment you poſſeſs—think me not unkind, Oſmond; I meant not to have given you pain by protracting my promiſe."

Oſmond received the paper with unfeigned pleaſure. As ſoon as the company were aſſembled at cards, and muſic, &c. he ſtole from the drawing-room, to read and compare the two papers, which had been the cauſe of inexpreſſible miſery to himſelf, and infinite vexation to his friends.

THE SCRAP.

"Your ſcrap, Oſmond, Matilda has

peruſed nearly as often as moments have paſſed. When ſummer ſurrounds us with delicious fruits, decks the terreſtial globe with choiceſt flowers, we regard them with delight: but we ſoon become ſo accuſtomed to their goodneſs, ſo habituated to their grateful odour, that—vain creatures as we are!—at laſt we look upon them as things of courſe, and are too often inſenſible to their real value, until the autumnal tinge reminds us, ſummer is gone! Then, and then only, awakened from the pleaſing deluſion, we look back with regret: we are ſurprized that our ſenſe of the enjoyment we poſſeſſed has lain ſo long dormant, and we catch with avidity the forced fruits from the hot-houſe, the cheriſhed plants from the nurſery, and eſtimate their leſs excellent flavour, becauſe they are almoſt unattainable. — Yes, Oſmond, heedleſs of the moment before me, I have indiſcriminately permitted your affection to riſe to its preſent height. To ſay you

are

are indifferent to me, would be contradictory to my feelings. On the contrary, I *eſteem* you above all men: in that channel a purer ſpring than mine never flowed. More I do not think I feel at preſent. The attachment I bear your family equals, I may venture to aſſert, the high veneration and praiſe ſo juſtly beſtowed by all who have the pleaſure to know them; and leſt you ſhould apprehend my heart to be prejudiced in favour of any of your ſex more than for him, who has been the companion of my infancy—

When thought met thought, in innocence array'd,
Our guileleſs hearts together ſought the ſhade,
When on the green we view'd the gaudy fly,
With fond delight enſnared it but to die:

To theſe dear ſcenes of happineſs and love,
Imaginative fancy bids me rove;
While mem'ry, faithful to the taſk, declares
Thoſe days, the only reſpite from all cares:

—I ſay, leſt you ſhould draw this con-

cluſion, or think me prepoſſeſſed in Melcourt's favour more than the bonds of common politeneſs juſtify, be ſatisfied you ſtand foremoſt there. You are no longer unacquainted with my heart, which, inſenſible as I believe it to be to a livelier paſſion, Matilda feels too confident of conjugal happineſs with Oſmond, to reject his offer, or the man ſhe eſteems above the generality of his ſex."

"P. S. Such, Oſmond, were my ſentiments when I wrote the above; they are ſomewhat altered by your abſence: the heart I then imagined inſenſible, was only ſo, becauſe it had all it could deſire: it is a deceitful truant, and ſince it has taken ſhelter—with—YOU—I muſt hope YOU will forgive its having once deceived your

"MATILDA."

Oſmond

Oſmond preſſed the paper to his lips, with fond energy, yet breathed over it the ſigh of deſpair, ejaculating aloud, "Matilda! deareſt! beloved Matilda! muſt I then reſign thee, at the moment thou wouldſt condeſcend to make me ſupremely bleſt?—It muſt not—ſhall not be! O! Matilda!—mine!—ah! no, it cannot be!—poverty ſhall never diſgrace thy lover—nor thy lover bring poverty to thy arms!—Deareſt paper! again let me kiſs thee!—thou ſhalt be my comforter—O! my burſting heart!"

Previous to this, Mr. Evans had converſed with Oſmond, and being ſatisfied with the account of himſelf, the next morning ſent for Matilda, and addreſſed her with his uſual candour: "Young Evington has proved, my dear child, every part of his conduct to be unexceptionable: he tells me, that his precipitate retreat from Bruges aroſe from a miſunderſtanding between you and him,

him, which gave you reaſon to believe his behaviour improper, while he imagined your's cruel and diſdainful. This being removed, you are both reconciled. Why did Matilda conceal this circumſtance from me? You have ever ſeemed to be his advocate, when I ſpoke of him in diſpleaſure for not writing, you adduced ſo many cogent reaſons, as probable preventions, that I little ſuſpected you were yourſelf diſſatisfied with the young gentleman. Say, dear girl, why did you not confide in your father?"

"Becauſe, my dear ſir, I knew you would be highly incenſed againſt Oſmond, whoſe actions were indeed to me incomprehenſible, and apparently derogatory to your daughter. As I could not explain his motives, I preferred waiting the opportunity when he might poſſibly vindicate himſelf. Was this deception juſtifiable or not, in his abſence? You know, my dear ſir, you are very warm, and Oſmond is not very temperate, ſo that I feared,

I feared, between you both, there would have been much fire, without knowing why or wherefore."

" Well, well, but what ſaid Mrs. Munſter—how was it that ſhe did not tell me of all this?"

" At my earneſt and expreſs deſire, ſhe forbore mentioning the circumſtance, even to his own ſiſter. True, I have had many hours' anxiety; yet when I think I have ſpared my father a moment's vexation, in his preſent ill ſtate of health, I rejoice at the probation."—Matilda then informed her father from whence aroſe the original point of their miſconception in the ſcrap.

" Come to my arms!" cried Mr. Evans, " deareſt girl! let me embrace you. I have warily guarded from extolling Oſmond's amiable qualities, leſt you might ſuſpect I too-earneſtly wiſhed this union to take place; and equally enjoined your adopted mother, Mrs. Munſter, to preſerve

ſerve the like ſilence. I ſhall now ſee you joined together without a fear that perſuaſion biaſſed either of you. Oſmond has faults, my love: he is very warm, haſty, and too apt to follow the impulſe of the moment: however, ſince you are neither blind to his follies, or his perfections, let me ſend for him this moment: indeed Matilda, he fondly loves you—nay, do not refuſe."

"Well, my dear father, I have no objection."

Oſmond was accordingly ſummoned to Mr. Evans' chamber; although the affectionate daughter feared he would exhauſt his little remaining ſtrength by fatigue.

"Who is that Mr.—Pſhaw!" continued Mr. Evans, "I can't recollect his name—Mr. Mr.—don't tell me, Tilda: Mr.—huſh! you know I won't be told Mr.—A B C D E F G—how provoking! yet

yet pray don't ſpeak—I ſhall have it in a minute by going over the alphabet—Mr. Mr. A B C D F F G H—H—H—yes—H—H is the letter—Mr. Hamton—Mr. Hamton—that Mrs Munſter ſpeaks of ſo highly?"

"You mean Mr. Hamilton, I ſuppoſe, ſir: he is the gentleman who bore Oſmond company, when he was confined with his broken arm, and much attached to Miſs Montgomery, a young lady of eminent beauty and accompliſhments, and a great favourite of Lady Beaufort's; but as neither of them have any fortune, I am told they have mutually agreed to ſeparate, and leave to chance their ever being united; as Mrs. Montgomery would not forgive her daughter's marrying a man unable to ſupport her in the ſtyle of life ſhe has been accuſtomed to live in."

As ſhe finiſhed, Oſmond entered with a palpitating heart, dreading to hear what his ſoul yearned to be aſſured of; while

while Matilda, no leſs agitated, now felt the thrilling pang of fearful love dart through her veins, then return to her glowing heart, leaving each trembling nerve ſo weak that ſhe was herſelf unable to perform the dictates of politeneſs.—Already anticipating the ſoft, the grateful confeſſions of Oſmond's love, and though ſhe had read it a thouſand times in his expreſſive countenance, ſhe felt as if *this* would be the firſt time; becauſe it was the firſt time ſhe acknowledged ſhe loved him, ſanctioned by a father's approbation.

"Oſmond," ſaid Mr. Evans, "I am no ſtranger to the partiality you entertain for my daughter; I have long obſerved it with regret, becauſe I *eſteemed* you, and I feared Matilda only did the ſame: I am happy to find theſe apprehenſions groundleſs, and that ſhe feels inclined to return my young friend's affection.—There, ſir, take this hand from her own

father;

father; and believe me I give it with as much pleaſure as you ought, and I know will, receive it.—Well, ſir!—do you not accept the precious gift?—Does Mr. Oſmond, after all his profeſſions, dare to reject my daughter?—Zounds, ſir! what do you mean? ſpeak! or by the heavens this arm—weak and trembling as it is—ſhall revenge the affront."

Matilda willingly extended her fair hand to the wretched Oſmond, whoſe honour, circumſtanced as he was, forbade him to accept the only gift on earth he valued?—She felt the moſt poignant diſtreſs at what appeared a pointed inſult to her and her father.—With infinite preſence of mind, ſhe affected to pick up a book, that had fallen, to hide her own emotions, and to give Oſmond time to recollect himſelf, which Mr. Evans effectually prevented, by commanding him, in a loud and menacing voice, to explain his meaning; exaſperated to find his generous

offer

offer refuſed, at the moment he expected to behold Oſmond on his knees, and in rapture. When he ceaſed ſpeaking, Oſmond rejoined with evident tremor, "Indeed, ſir, I am more to be pitied than abuſed: yet I am not ſurprized at your reſentment; who, indeed, would not catch with avidity the ineſtimable gift you would honour me with?—Ah, ſir! though my life is devoted to your lovely daughter, though my heart adores her, as heaven is my witneſs, yet the wretched victim of fortune's caprice, as I am, forces me to decline accepting that dear hand at preſent. Some time hence I hope to prove myſelf worthy of the only bleſſing I can have in this life. If in the interim, Miſs Evans—"

"Hold, Mr. Evington!" cried the enraged father, trembling with paſſion, "if *you*, ſir, pretend to love my daughter, and I—I—ſir, think you a proper match, ſir,—and condeſcend to ſanction the union, what occaſion, ſir, have you to

—to

—to think at all, as long as you know you love her, and ſhe likes you? *S'death*, ſir!"

"O God! what a trial is this!" exclaimed Oſmond. "Some few days ſince, this interrogation would have required no anſwer, but by proving the ardency of my paſſion.—*Now*, it is utterly impoſſible to explain the cruel neceſſity which compels me to appear baſely inſenſible to your friendſhip. Suffice it to ſay, Mr. Evans, you may reſt aſſured, that nothing but the ſtricteſt principles of honour would induce me to ſacrifice my own happineſs, at the imminent riſque of your's and your daughter's diſpleaſure."

"Enough, ſir! I ſhall pain you no farther; and deſire that you ceaſe to think on Miſs Evans, until, ſir, you judge it expedient to give her father ſufficient juſtification for this unhandſome treatment—Sir, I wiſh you good-day, ſir—leave me, ſir—good-day, ſir,—S'death, why don't you go, ſir?"

Matilda

Matilda could reſtrain her anguiſh of mind no longer. She beheld Oſmond, half diſtracted, prepare to leave the room with irreſolute ſteps, ſtill fixing his eyes affectionately upon her, and articulating in broken ſighs, "My ſoul, Matilda! and muſt I then leave you for ever—and know I am dear to thee—Oh! Matilda! I go—that honour which tears me from thee, which makes me appear falſe—vile in thy revered father's eyes—ſhall ſhield me in the field of battle"—Then taking her hand reſpectfully, as ſhe had thrown herſelf on her knees before her father, he kiſſed it with ardour, and left the room.

"This," cried Mr. Evans, "is the reward of my indulgence to a headſtrong youth—Audacious boy!—Hypocrite!—no, Matilda, I will not hear him vindicated—Not a word, I ſay!—S'death, I'll not—no, I'll not bear the inſult! No,"—continued he, turning round his neck-

cloth

cloth as it tightened with anger—" no, I ſay—I will not—Zounds—the family ſhall—"

" For heaven's ſake, my deareſt father," ſaid the weeping Matilda, throwing her arms round his neck, " calm yourſelf—there is ſome myſtery."

" Myſtery! what do you mean by myſtery?—Zounds! are we, *are we* to have nothing but myſtery? I'll have no more myſteries—leave me, Matilda: I ſhall write to Mr. Evington—tell him—I—No, I'll ſee him—well, no, no,—tell Mrs. Munſter I muſt ſpeak with her—I ſhall depart from Bruſſels ſhortly—directly—What! reject my child! reject a hand that's worth a diadem what an inſult! reject my—"

" Indeed, ſir, Oſmond does not mean it as ſuch."

" I ſay he DID mean it!—what! Matilda, *you* dare to take his part!—Silly girl! harkye, Matilda; I ſolemnly forbid you"—Matilda ſhuddered—"Ah, ſir!" exclaimed

exclaimed ſhe, " forbear your ſentence—alas! alas! this tortured boſom will burſt—oh! wretched girl! my father, I implore you be not precipitate: you are ill—ha! ſpeak to me! ſpeak to your Matilda! ſay all—ſay every thing you wiſh; I'll do any thing—ſpeak!—ſpeak! oh help! help! my father's dying! he bleeds! oh, God of mercy! help my father!"—She rang the bell violently, and the room inſtantly filled with people.

Mr. Evans had in fact broken a blood veſſel, and now remained ſpeechleſs, ſpitting blood, while Matilda exerted juſt power enough to pull the bell, when on ſeeing the blood encreaſe ſhe fainted away.—The amazement of Mr. and Mrs. Evington may be more eaſily imagined than deſcribed: we conſequently leave the invalids in the hands of able phyſicians and good friends.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.

" Ni l'or, ne la grandeur, ne nous rendent heureux ;
Ces deux divinités n'accordent à nos voeux,
Que des biens peu certain, qu'un plaiſir peu tranquille."

LA FONTAINE.

OSMOND, on quitting Mr. Evans' room, left the houſe ; the ſituation of his mind being ſuch, that every ſubject his ideas fixed upon appeared equally gloomy. Undecided what courſe to purſue, while " *Every thought was filled with care*," he wandered unknowing where he went. The impoſſibility of making his circumſtances known to Mr. Evans, at ſo unſeaſonable a period, or to acquaint Matilda of them, unleſs with his family's concurrence, rendered him miſer-

able and irreſolute. At length he determined to ſeek his father, whoſe advice became neceſſary, and abide thereby; but ſcarcely had the thought taken birth 'ere it was ſtifled, by painting to himſelf the ſorrow an explanation would cauſe this excellent parent at ſuch a delicate juncture; beſides, would it not appear as if he reproached him for an inevitable misfortune?—"I'll ſooner die!" exclaimed Oſmond, as he gained the park-gate, where unwittingly he found himſelf.—Here proceeding onwards, he again took out of his pocket the eventful ſcrap—"I ſaid thou ſhouldſt be my comforter, dear, precious ſcrap; inaſmuch as thou haſt been my tormentor—Oh God! oh God! miſery is the fate of man!—Life is but a ſcene of wretchedneſs, and all earthly happineſs ideal."—Oſmond now ſat down to write; he framed ſeveral letters in pencil to Matilda, ſtating the impoſſibility of his becoming her huſband at preſent; all of which, in his opinion, being

being inexpreſſive of his feelings, were ſucceſſively deſtroyed. — He then threw the offending pencil among the ſhrubs, and reſigned himſelf to that inactive ſtupor of mind, which ariſes from a total inability to determine upon, or to adhere to any point. At length he reſolved to call at the poſt-office, and enquire whether there were any letters for the family.—One only for himſelf.

" My much-eſteemed young friend,

" The poignant diſtreſs I feel in writing theſe lines only equals the urgency of their purport: in a few words, I have been arreſted for more than I have at preſent in the world.—I am in confinement—a part of what I had the ſatisfaction to lend you, my dear and worthy young pupil, will be of the utmoſt conſequence to

" SAMUEL ORTON."

" This letter completely fills my cup of miſery !" ſaid Oſmond: " O ! fate, why are you ſo ſevere ?" A meſſenger now came running to him, whom he recognized to be Mr. Evans' black ſervant. The boy, ſpeechleſs, and with ſwollen eyes, caught hold of Oſmond's coat, pulling him the contrary way to that which he was going.—Not having regained his breath, he endeavoured by dumb ſigns, to explain his meaning.—Somewhat recovered the boy articulated, " Maſſa !—Maſſa!—ſhall die—die!"—" Die!" repeated Oſmond, ſtarting from his lethargy—" Peace, child ! I'm not dying—leave me, Zinco, leave me."—

" My maſſa, Mr. Evans, vill die—O ! gar bleſs my poor dear maſſa—O ! he vill die."

" Good heavens ! what do you mean ?—is Mr. Evans worſe ? ſpeak, good boy: nay ! do not weep—tell me what means all this ?"

Zinco

Zinco related, to the beſt of his knowledge, all he could remember about Mr. Evans' ſudden fit, concluding his incoherent narrative, with " the reaſon he would die, was becauſe poor Mr. Evans had broke all his veins; and doctor ſays, ſir, that maſſa vill no live more than two tre hours."

Oſmond, half diſtracted with this intelligence, proceeded to the hotel, with all poſſible ſpeed; ſometimes flattering himſelf the circumſtance might be greatly exaggerated; but on entering the houſe, the confirmation augmented his diſtreſs. The phyſician then ſeriouſly informed him that Mr. Evans might ſurvive a day or two, but that his recovery defied all human power: " Indeed, I ſhould adviſe the gentleman," continued the doctor, " if he has any worldly concerns, to ſettle them quickly: thank heaven, he has his ſenſes, poor gentle-

man; it's a great pity he was ſo paſſionate, for I'm informed—"

"Sir," interrupted Oſmond, beating his forehead, "Sir, it was I who killed him — Yes, I, ſir, am that wretch!" "Indeed! young gentleman!" ſaid the phyſician, calmly taking a pinch of ſnuff, "then, ſir, you did very wrong; and as you confeſs yourſelf to be a murderer, I beg to take my leave—I wiſh you good-day, ſir—you had better not remain in this town—we have laws for murderers, ſir."—

Oſmond looked on him diſdainfully as he retired, and fought his father to obtain further particulars.

Mrs. Evington and Maria were ſtill ignorant of the misfortune that had ſo deeply wounded their finances; conſequently heard, with undiſſembled aſtoniſhment, from Mrs. Munſter, who was

equally

equally uninformed of this reverſe of fate, that Oſmond had actually refuſed Matilda's hand. As her mother, ſhe felt all the indignation and reſentment an angry parent could do on the occaſion; and though her uſual good diſpoſition ever ſought to reconcile the afflicted, ſhe could find no argument, no paliation to juſtify this rejection of her beloved daughter. Vainly did Mrs. Evington ſtrive to ſuggeſt that ſome poſſible motives, perhaps unknown to them all, compelled her ſon to relinquiſh the only woman he loved: — "for that," continued Mrs. Evington, "I am confident he does, whatever may be the cauſe of his preſent conduct."

"My dear Mrs. Evington, you muſt forgive me," rejoined Mrs. Munſter, "when I ſay Mr. Oſmond has forfeited my eſteem for ever. A man is highly reprehenſible that trifles with a young woman's affections; and though he is

your ſon, his character is ſtigmatized in my opinion for ever. No, my dear madam, ſuch conduct is neither permitable, or venial."

" My dear madam, revoke that harſh ſentence," ſaid Maria; " hear my brother; I am certain there muſt be ſomething extraordinary in this rejection: it being only laſt night that he and I were converſing of Matilda, and had you heard him you would never doubt the ſincerity of his affection."

" Maria, had I *not heard* it from Miſs Evans herſelf, I ſhould indeed miſtruſt my own ears: it really *is* extraordinary," ſaid Mrs. Munſter with emphaſis, leaving the room as Oſmond aſcended the ſtaircaſe.—Maria ran to meet him:—his agitation ſhook every limb; his eyes were ſwollen; his face was pale, ſorrow hung heavy upon every feature.—" Come in, my dear brother, for God's ſake come, come—ſpeak to our mother—ſhe is miſerable—what have you done, Oſmond?—

mond?—why do you fix your eyes on me with ſuch vacancy?—do not turn from your ſiſter—Maria will comfort you—ſtop, Oſmond—you muſt not, ſhall not go without ſpeaking to our dear mother—ſhe is ill."

"Ill!" cried Oſmond, with emotion; "my mother, alſo, ill!—where is ſhe?—what new evil can croud upon my diſtracted brain? Muſt the embittered cup reek with deſtruction—Ha! what is that?" enquired Oſmond of a ſervant with a letter in his hand—"For me?—open it, Maria; for by God I have not courage."—Maria broke the ſeal, and read a few ſhort lines from the colonel of his regiment, indicating the impoſſibility of prolonging his leave of abſence, and earneſtly deſiring him to join his company the following day, as they would perhaps march that night.

"Let them march to the devil!" cried Oſmond, "where I may as well follow,

as I can rejoin them on earth to-morrow! —You ſay my mother is ill—where is ſhe?—In her room?" Maria led the way. They found Mrs. Evington had been in tears---"Ah, my dear mother, what ails you? let me ſend for the phyſician—I believe he is ſtill up ſtairs."

"I want no phyſician, my ſon: you can adminiſter the only medicine that will afford relief, by ſpecifying your reaſons for rejecting Miſs Evans' hand?"

"Oh! compaſſionate my ſufferings!—in the name of mercy, do not aſk me, madam! you will learn too ſoon—would that I could conceal them from you for ever!—then indeed I might have courage to ſupport this load of miſery."

"Oſmond, from you I can bear to hear the truth, be it what it may; tell me, I conjure you; I ſhall be comparatively happy, if my enquiries are ſatisfied.—Do not heſitate—my bewildered imagination burns with impatience to penetrate

trate this myſtery.—Miſs Evans!—handſome!—accompliſhed!—with a large fortune!"

"There—there's the point, my dear madam!—were ſhe fortuneleſs, your ſon would now be ſupremely happy."

"This is truly an unexpected objection!—why the very, and perhaps the only thing that courts the admiration of the world, creates your diſtreſs—come, come, I cannot ſuppoſe you in earneſt."

"Then, madam, undeceive yourſelf, and depend on it I never was more truly ſerious in all my life."

"This is incomprehenſible!—why ſurely your ſenſes are deranged!"

"My brain, in truth, maddens every inſtant—although I believe the anguiſh I feel is too acute to doubt my ſenſes at this moment—how long they will remain ſo I cannot aſcertain."

"Hear me, Oſmond!—were *you*, my dear ſon, fortuneleſs, then, indeed, I al-

low the world might ſuppoſe your views were mercenary—but your fortune authoriſes you to *ſeek* ſuch an alliance, and to gratify your affections."

" You have, my dear mother, preciſely ſanctioned my refuſal, by confeſſing your ſentiments concordant with my own.—No, no—I have not the power of chooſing for myſelf—time—perhaps—never mind me, mother.—Yes, time, time—may reſtore that power, and my loſt happineſs—O! madam! aſk no more queſtions—I cannot anſwer them—your interrogations rend my ſoul—deareſt, deareſt mother, I—am—no, your ſon is not unworthy of you—but—"

He kiſſed her hands, his voice trembled, and he became unable to ſuſtain her maternal tenderneſs, or liſten to her gentle reproofs, any longer.—On entering his room, the firſt thing that attracted his notice was Doctor Orton's letter, lying on the table.

—" What

—" What expedient is there left!" exclaimed young Evington, ſnatching the paper—" To apply to my father, who has juſt informed me that paying my drafts will greatly diſtreſs him, would be madneſs—Hamilton is not worth a ſhilling—Mr. Evans, oh God! is dying!—or he would, I know, ſupply my wants—yet this worthy creature muſt not ſtarve n a priſon—a damned jail!" cried Oſmond aloud. Hamilton entered, overhearing the laſt ſentence, " My friend," aid Hamilton, " I have been ſeeking you—of whom were you talking? who is in ail?"

" Hamilton—I conjure you, leave me at preſent—I am miſerable—unfit to ſee any living creature."

" The very reaſon which demands my preſence.—Can I ever forget the time when *your* company was moſt unwiſhed —intruſion which nevertheleſs claims my eternal gratitude?—Oſmond, my friend, confide

confide to me your ſorrow: if you refuſe, our friendſhip is cancelled---To you every feeling of my heart has been diſplayed in the naked language of unvarniſhed truth."

"You cannot redreſs my grief—you cannot alleviate my misfortunes: nor can I reveal them."

"Oſmond you are diſtreſſed for money—I know it—I am the cauſe of this diſtreſs—otherwiſe you would not conceal it from me: the letter you now hold ſolicits money—let me ſee it, Evington—Nay! by the friendſhip I bear you, I WILL ſee it."

Hamilton ſeized the letter, and peruſed its contents, while Oſmond, ſomewhat angrily, warned him that he would repent his temerity.—"Are you ſatisfied, ſir?"

"Perfectly ſo—poor confounded beggar that I am! Is then my friend, my earthly ſaviour, to ſuffer for my follies? Perdition

dition on the firſt inventor of cards! but for that diabolical invention, my friend had been happy, and I—"

"Hold, Hamilton! you rave—there is another cauſe which makes me wretched—here, here it lies"—ſtriking his breaſt with violence—"One that no mortal can eradicate.—Beſides which, Hamilton, I have a ſiſter—as good a girl as ever breathed, and while her brother lives, no man ſhall ill treat her with impunity.—Shall, then, Melcourt—that ſycophant! that inſidious villain!—paſs my notice unchaſtiſed? I only learnt this morning that he reſides at an adjacent village. Take him this note—he may elude our vigilance to morrow—ſay I will meet him where he ſhall appoint—that done, my good friend, we will talk on other matters.—Go, Hamilton—and if on earth find him. Meanwhile I ſhall wait your return, and I hope have had the ſatisfaction to ſee Mr. Evans."—Hamilton expoſtulated a ſhort time, but finding Oſmond

mond determined, bade him good-morning.

Peter, who had been in purſuit of the other half of the miſchief-making ſcrap, at this period entered the room, where Oſmond yet remained, whoſe diſturbed mind was evident in every feature, and his whole deportment. Peter, at any other time, might have been a welcome intruder: his preſence now only aggravated the keen remembrance of the paſt; for having no longer occaſion for the other half ſcrap, ſince Matilda had given him a copy of the original, which had completely eradicated every ſpark of latent ſuſpicion, he had nearly forgotten Peter's demiſſion. "I know your errand," cried Oſmond, as Peter entered; "I have no longer occaſion for your ſervices—thank you, Peter—now leave me—haſte! begone! leave, *leave* me, I ſay!"

Peter heſitated, looked at him with ſurprize,

ſurprize, and moved ſlowly towards the door, muttering in a low voice, " his maſter was not uſed to treat his ſervants in that manner, after they had ſlaved night and day to oblige him."—" No, ſtay," rejoined Oſmond, recollecting himſelf—" whither will you go, Peter? what has detained you ſo long? where is the paper?"

" Thank God!" cried Peter, " I am glad, ſir, to ſee you yourſelf again.—I am juſt returned, ſir, from Bruges, where I found that Mrs. *Forrainſit* had parted with her maid, *Ma'amſelle Jolymain*, who then lived with a lady at Antwerp; ſo there I repaired without loſs of time, and to my great mortification I was told this lady had parted with *Ma'amſelle Jolymain*, becauſe ſhe could neither varniſh, nor make beautiful waſhes for the face; but ſhe lived with another lady who had juſt gone to the Hague: though a little diſconſolate, to the Hague I went—it's a mighty pretty place, ſir, a'ant it?—they call

call it a village—I'm ſure I ſhould like to live in ſuch a village all my life—what grand houſes the gentlefolks have! they all ſeem juſt new built, they look ſo clean—well, but as I was ſaying, *Ma'amſelle Jolymain* had left her place again, ſir, to live with a maiden lady, on purpoſe to be near a favoured lover, in this lady's ſervice as footman, in Bruſſels. Indeed, ſir, this laſt information vexed me ſadly, ſo much that I ſwore to hunt no more for this *Ma'amſelle Jolymain*, or the note either: in fact, ſir, I was ſo mortified that *Ma'amſelle Jolymain* had broken her vows, that I reſolved never to ſee her again. However, do you know, ſir, as I came near Bruſſels, near the houſe of this *Mrs. Jolymain*, I could not reſiſt the temptation—don't you remember, ſir, what a very pretty woman ſhe is?—at the ſame time I ſhould have it in my power to oblige my dear young maſter, and could upbraid her for her infidelity; I went in, determined to be revenged: would

would you believe, ſir, any thing more provoking, as to find ſhe, and the footman, had decamped the Lord knows where!"

"Then you have not got the paper at laſt?"

"Lord bleſs you, ſir! how ſhould I? when I juſt told you that I could not find that jade Fanchette!"

"Well, well!" cried Oſmond, "enough—I wiſh to be alone—go learn from the phyſician how Mr. Evans is? He is juſt leaving him."

Young Hamilton immediately proceeded towards Mr. Melcourt's: very opportunely he found him at home.—"I am ſorry, ſir, at any time to be an unwelcome viſitor, which this note doubtleſs renders me," ſaid Hamilton, giving him the letter.—Melcourt, ſomewhat ſuſpecting whence it came, replied, "You will oblige me by your name, ſir, and from whoſe inſtigation we meet?"

"This

" This note, ſir, will apprize you of both: my name, ſir, is Hamilton."

" From Mr. Oſmond Evington, I preſume, ſir?"

" You are not miſtaken, ſir."

" I thought as much.—Then, Mr. Hamilton, you may take the note back again, and acquaint Mr. Oſmond Evington, I have nothing to ſay or do with him, or any part of his family, or any of his acquaintance, and have the honour of wiſhing you good-morning, ſir."

" Give me leave to obſerve, Mr. Melcourt, that this mode of proceeding is very ungentlemanlike, and that you cannot decline giving me an anſwer."

" I moſt certainly ſhall decline it, by not doing it, ſir."

" Mr, Melcourt, this is no time for jeſting; recollect, ſir, you are ſpeaking to a gentleman; one who is not unacquainted with the punctilios of honour: unleſs, ſir, you give me an anſwer, this affront muſt be adjuſted between ourſelves."

" Juſt

" Juſt as you pleaſe, Mr. Hamilton; I ſhall not retract my words: and now you are at liberty to follow your own inclinations."

" I ſhall, ſir, and begin by telling you that you are no gentleman, but a coward, deſtitute of honour, of all principle, and deſerving every opprobrious appellation uſually given to ſuch a character; and I will repeat the accuſation wherever we meet."

" Then it ſhall be ſoon, Mr. Hamilton."

" The ſooner the better, ſir; when, where you pleaſe: I will, and do repeat my words."

" An hour hence, then; and recollect, ſir, before we meet, that I regard Mr. Evington with as much inſignificance as I do his friend."

" Which borders on *eſteem*, compared to that ſovereign contempt with which Mr. Evington's friend conſiders Mr. Melcourt.—An hour hence, behind the grove, I ſhall condeſcend to meet you, ſir," ſaid Hamilton, leaving the room.

Young

Young Hamilton returned home, to write a few lines to Oſmond, in caſe he ſhould fall; to his captain, and to Miſs Montgomery; then prepared to meet his antagoniſt.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VIII.

" Il faut d'un même coup punir ſa perfidie;
Mais du nom d'aſſaſſin ne prens aucun effroi :
Ce qui fut crime en lui, ſera vertu en toi."

LA HENRIADE DE VOLTAIRE.

MR. Evans' unfortunate accident had thrown the whole family into ſuch confuſion, that neither the one or the other allowed themſelves leiſure to reflect on their own ſeparate affairs. Mr. Evington, indeed, could ſcarcely refrain from ſometimes heaving a ſigh to the ſad remembrance of all his departed fortune, which obliged him to repair to England immediately. Yet this circumſtance provoked ſilence for many reaſons, and even prevented him entering on any private topic of converſation, although he ſuſpected

pected from the countenance of Mrs. Munſter and his wife, that ſomething had paſſed of an unpleaſant nature, moſt probably concerning his ſon and Matilda. To promote this union had ever been the ſanguine wiſh of his heart: yet Mr. Evington was not diveſted of ſome ſhare of family pride, and could not endure the painful ſuppoſition that *his ſon* ſhould ſolicit the hand of the wealthy Miſs Evans, now that he was deprived of fortune. Mrs. Evington ſeldom interrogated her huſband, when ſhe perceived him thoughtful; aſſured that he repoſed the implicit confidence in her which never waited to be queſtioned, when he thought proper to impart the ſubject of his meditations, and till then it was unavailing to preſs the point. From experience ſhe had learnt the efficacy of this forbearance; and now as uſual paid no further attention to his depreſſion of ſpirits, which ſhe imagined principally aroſe from Mr. Evans' dangerous ſituation,

than

than, by redoubling her tenderneſs, and by ſoft endearments, ſeeking to diſpel his chagrin, or lead him, as ſhe frequently did, to an explanation of the cauſe. Matilda had indeed received a ſevere ſhock, rendered more affecting by the unhappy effects it had produced on a beloved father. She bore up againſt the immediate ſtroke, with true magnanimity; but her frame underwent an electrifying tremor, that ſubſided only by the more cruel ſtate of her head and heart: frequently ſhe diſbelieved her own ears, at others ſhe imagined the ſcene ideal; ſhe then doubted Oſmond's affection, and would ſometimes diſdain it with injured pride: yet ſhe could not deny that he was inconteſtably dear to her; that her future happineſs, and eternal peace of mind lay for ever emboſomed in him alone. Under theſe ſentiments we may eaſily believe, that, notwithſtanding Mrs. Munſter's earneſt deſire to eraſe him from her

memory, as an unworthy object, it was a task easier devised than effected; and perhaps a latent hope, that still mingled with her doubts and fears, rendered it equally unwished. In this state of mind Maria accosted her perplexed friend, and affectionately enquired after her health: learning it to be rather better, she proceeded to another subject.—"Perhaps, my dear Matilda, your resentment extends to the offender's unhappy sister: if so, it would poignantly wound my feelings: for although Mrs. Munster has clearly evinced my brother's culpability, something tells me—yes, indeed, something whispers me, that Osmond is the most to be pitied of us all."

Matilda spoke not—she smiled, took Maria's hand, and pressed it gently.—"Would my brother only yesterday have professed what he did for my dear friend, merely to triumph over her to-day?—ah!

ah! no, no! I am too well acquainted with his ſentiments, of which his letters to me bear the ſtrongeſt teſtimonials; never did any man breathe more ſenſibly impreſſed with Matilda's worth, and amiable qualities, or one who more paſſionately, more affectionately loved her."

"His *words*, I muſt confeſs, accord with your aſſertions; but we muſt judge of a man's *actions*.—Ah! Maria, what a proof has he given of their ſincerity!—ſuch as have deceived, and made me aſhamed of my own weakneſs."

"Would to heaven," replied Maria, "I could only gain admittance to his chamber! there is ſome fatality attending this buſineſs, ſome inconceivable myſtery, which has prompted him to make this cruel ſacrifice."

"Have you then not ſeen him ſince our conference? I wiſh you had—yet, why do I expoſe myſelf by pourtraying the frailty of my ſex, even in diſobedience to my father's expreſs orders?—

However, when you do, Maria, ſhould he mention my name, tell him, my dear friend, I muſt ever lament that my ſlender penetration has expoſed my honoured father to a refuſal, and myſelf to an in——yes, after what Mr. Oſmond has advanced in your hearing, as well as mine, I muſt term it an—inſult. You may further add, that my eſteem henceforward will ceaſe; and that in recollecting his ſiſter's amiable qualities, I hope to obliviate his ungenerous treatment towards myſelf. — Yes, Maria is ſtill the ſame, and ſtill dear to me.— The brother's faults ſhall not diminiſh the ſincere friendſhip I have for his ſiſter."

" In compliance with your wiſhes, Matilda, I will faithfully deliver this meſſage; although in ſo doing I apply the cauſtic where I ought to adminiſter an opiate. Let theſe tears, my dear friend, ſiſter of my heart, with thoſe now trembling in your own eye, palliate

liate in ſome meaſure his apparent guiltineſs: were I not ſatisfied of the rectitude of my brother's principles, of the purity of his intentions, I would not urge a word in his mediation."

Matilda had combated for a long time the emotions of her heart: with feigned complacency ſhe endeavoured to appear calm, but at length the impulſe of nature overpowered the diſſemblings of art: her diſtreſs refuſed to be longer impeded in its courſe; for ſome time it gliſtened in her eye like the dew-drop on the blue-bell, which ſhe had often wiped away, and, as ſhe thought, unperceived by the no leſs afflicted Maria. It now burſt in large drops, which forced their impetuous courſe progreſſively from her heart to the heavy eyelid, down her palid cheek, and in ſilent evidence bore the lucid witneſs of the true ſtate of her mind. She now yielded to her feelings, and wept freely—then being ſomewhat

relieved, ſhe rejoined, " You ſee, Maria, my efforts are fruitleſs : your brother indeed, I believed eminently deſerving—why has he changed ?—Alas ! why are the faireſt proſpects perpetually overclouded ?—why is nothing certain in human nature ? Alas ! becauſe all is frail and impotent ! Farewel, dear Maria ! before we meet again perhaps ſomething may tranſpire to our mutual ſatisfaction. If my deareſt father recovers this unexpected trial—at preſent I will endeavour to compoſe myſelf.—Adieu, Maria, adieu !"

During this time young Hamilton attended the aſſignation of Mr. Melcourt, who was not, however, yet arrived.—Adeline, the ſtill fond and faithful Adeline, watched her lover, with the tenderneſs of an anxious wife, inſtead of the deſerted miſtreſs. Unknown to Melcourt, ſhe followed him here, where, from the communication of a faithful

ſervant,

ſervant, equally attached to Adeline, from having been in her brother's ſervice, ſhe became apprized of all his actions. This ſervant now informed her that his maſter was either much indiſpoſed, or had received ſome very bad news; for that he raved, and tore about the houſe like a mad-man, or ſat muſing in ſuch deep deſpondency, as gave him apprehenſions his mind was affected.—Such intelligence was more than ſufficient. Adeline flew to him, and by every fond perſuaſion, by endearing careſſes and tenderneſs, ſought to diſpel his ſorrow; but Melcourt's mind was too much ruffled by the approaching ſcene, to liſten to any converſation, though an angel had deſcended from heaven. The appointed hour drew near; he ſtarted up, ſwore ſeveral unmeaning oaths, then exclaimed, "It muſt be ſo!"—Again he roſe from his ſeat, and embracing Adeline, bade her be tranquil—he would ſoon

return, and by his future attention endeavour to repay her goodneſs.

Adeline, terrified, implored on her knees to learn where he was going: a duel now ſuggeſted itſelf to her imagination; the inquietude of his mind, the unintelligible ſentences he uttered, confirmed the ſuppoſition. As the forked lightning flaſhes upon us inſtantaneouſly, as the fiery meteor darts along the ſky, and vaniſhes in a paſſing glance, ſo did this ſad truth ruſh upon her ſenſes: ſhe gave a piercing cry, and fell ſenſeleſs.—Melcourt became half frantic, by the contending paſſions of love and revenge, which at this moment aſſailed him. Now wavering with which to comply—his honour already much injured—he knew it, he felt it—and to decline Hamilton's challenge would for ever blaſt his reputation.—No alternative remained. After repoſing Adeline on the couch, he committed

committed her to his ſervant's protection and tore himſelf from her ſide. Then with haſty ſteps attended his appointment, where Hamilton waited.

Both highly irritated, they were equally eager to diſpatch the buſineſs. They took a ſhort diſtance; Melcourt fired — he wounded Hamilton in the left arm, who returned the fire.—The ball lodged juſt above his antagoniſt's breaſt —Melcourt felt himſelf deeply wounded, which aggravated in lieu of appeaſing him. On being queſtioned whether he was ſatisfied, he replied in the negative— young Hamilton obſerved, " that he came not to ſlaughter; and that as he perceived Mr. Melcourt already the greateſt ſufferer, he begged to decline renewing the fire.—The impetuous Melcourt peremptorily inſiſted " that as he was *not* ſatisfied, and being the moſt wounded of the two, he reſolved to fire again," adding much ungentlemanlike language.—Ha-

milton no longer refuſed ; the paces were remeaſured.—At this period a ſtranger appeared, who having heard the report of a piſtol, haſtened to the place from whence it came : he now interfered, and finding both the young men more ſeriouſly wounded than they imagined, with much difficulty he prevented their renewing the fire, by repreſenting to them their incapability, if it were only from the loſs of blood they had ſuſtained.—Mr. Melcourt here fell fainting in the ſtranger's arms : his wound bled copiouſly ; a deadly hue hung upon his features, and he ſeemed juſt expiring.

At this moment Adeline made her appearnce, pale and breathleſs ; her ſenſes, in the firſt dread of the event, had forſaken her ; but on her recovery at the hotel, they renovated with unuſual fortitude ; in the preſent caſe ſhe evinced almoſt ſupernatural magnanimity of ſoul. From anticipating the worſt ; ſhe prepared herſelf

herſelf to meet it reſigned.—Melcourt's livid countenance appalled her for a minute:—ſhe ſhrunk back, and nearly loſt all her firmneſs. Yet the ſtrength of her affection, notwithſtanding his paſt ill uſage, counterbalanced every other ſentiment: her exiſtence appeared only valuable, while of import to afford him conſolation, or relieve an hour's ſickneſs; and previous to their parting, a gleam of renewed tenderneſs filled his boſom, in the midſt of phrenzy, when he preſſed her in his arms. Her deareſt hopes were awakened in her mind.—She would gladly then have yielded up life rather than revive to meet his coolneſs. Melcourt, on hearing her voice, extended his hand, and faintly, yet affectionately, chid her for expoſing herſelf to ſuch a diſtreſſing ſcene. Adeline, kiſſing it with warmeſt zeal, exclaimed—"Oh a thouſand and a thouſand times be bleſt this hour, if it reſtores me your love, and renders me uſe-

ful to thee, deareſt friend of my heart! If they have killed my love, which heaven forbid! ſhall I not cloſe his eyes, ſhall not the laſt ſound upon his ſenſes, be Adeline's voice? Shall not Adeline receive his laſt breath—that done, we ſoon ſhall meet—Yes dear, dear Melcourt! Adeline can never ſurvive the hour that parts thee from her. O! *never, never!*"

The ſurgeon, with the unknown, removed the patients. Hamilton unadviſedly was borne to the Hotel de Belle Vue. No words can convey the force of Oſmond's diſtreſs, on beholding his friend return in this condition: a new claim, new misfortune, demanded his preſence at Bruſſells. "This, indeed," cried Oſmond, "is all that was wanted to complete my wretchedneſs!—My Matilda torn from me, by the loſs of fortune—My honour on the brink of a precipice—

pice—One friend thrown into priſon, on my account—the other gaſping for breath, which in juſtice ought to breathe only curſes on me. — O! ye rigorous fates! and thou *giant* neceſſity! muſt we then eternally bend beneath your load of miſeries!—will neither virtue, valour, nor goodneſs, age, nor worth, remit your ſeverity? Yet why do I commiſerate our united misfortunes? Let me attend to my friend! — Hamilton! my dear friend! it drives me diſtracted, to ſee you in ſuch exquiſite pain. —The devil take Melcourt! I muſt, I will go and force him to give me ſatisfaction for this new injury.—By heavens he ſhall, though he were in the grave itſelf!"

"Have I not already told you," replied Hamilton, "that he is preparing moſt probably to meet whatever puniſhment he deſerves, from the great, yet merciful, Avenger of all wrongs? It would

would be madneſs, and cruelty in you, to moleſt his few remaining hours."

" Right—you are right, Hamilton—I am indeed mad—Can you forgive me?—but revenge, pity, and miſery, wage war againſt my troubled ſoul."

The phyſician, with the ſurgeon, now viſited their patient: the latter extracted the ball, and pronounced Hamilton's arm to be in a dubious ſtate; the former had little comfort to offer: from loſs of blood, and bodily exertion, Hamilton's ſtrength was greatly exhauſted; exceſſive pain had created much fever, and altogether neither the one or the other ſeemed to think favourably of his ſituation.

Mr. Evington having now learnt the termination of this unhappy duel, with paternal care attended alternately the bed-ſide of the two invalids. While Oſmond

mond left the room to diſpatch a ſervant with a letter to his colonel, wherein he briefly ſtated the events which prevented his complying with his orders, and moreover requeſting a prolongation of leave of abſence, Hamilton availed himſelf of this opportunity to requeſt he might be conveyed into Mr. Evans' chamber: the ſurgeon peremptorily objected to this ſtep, from two motives; the danger of his patient's wound bleeding afreſh, and the neceſſity of keeping Mr. Evans quiet, whoſe diſſolution hourly approached.

"Sir," rejoined Hamilton, "'tis in vain to diſſuade me: my life is not of more conſequence than is this interview with Mr. Evans. If you value my future peace of mind, ſir, you will not prevent me."—The ſurgeon finding all expoſtulation fruitleſs, conſented, provided he might firſt go and prepare Mr. Evans to receive him.—Hamilton waited his return with extreme impatience, dreading

that

that every minute's delay, in his feeble and exhauſted condition, would wholly diſable him to communicate what appeared to him indiſpenſable.—The trial now came; he ſummoned all his ſtrength, and was borne to the bed-ſide of the dying man, whoſe hollow eye, and convulſive countenance, depicted the aweful hour to be already at hand. Young Hamilton gazed on him a few moments, then with a ſigh, which Mr. Evans involuntarily reſponded, ſilently prayed that heaven would procraſtinate their exiſtence, until this interview was over.—A contracted ſmile from Mr. Evans, equally affected by young Hamilton's change of countenance, from the bloom of vigorous youth and health, to the pale, yet ſtreaked cheek of agonizing pain, ſomewhat reanimated Hamilton's ſpirits. He took the good Mr. Evans' hand, and preſſed it to his heart, then making one great exertion, diſmiſſed the attendants tolerably compoſed; he then informed

Mr.

Mr. Evans of the motives which compelled Oſmond to confront *his* diſpleaſure, by ſacrificing his own happineſs to delicacy of ſentiment. " This is not all," continued he, but Mr. Evington entering, interrupted the converſation: he ſtood aghaſt to behold the mournful picture; then making a motion to retire, Hamilton beckoned him to approach.—" The exhibitions of the heart which I am about to pourtray," ſaid Hamilton, " apply, ſir, as much to yourſelf, as to this gentleman.—After this, Mr. Evans, you will be ſurprized to hear that I am the unfortunate cauſe of your death; and"—turning to Mr. Evington—" of your excellent ſon's preſent pecuniary embarraſſment—It is I, ſir, who am the unhappy cauſe; it is I who have beggared him, and myſelf. To extricate me from a *debt of honour* of large amount, Mr. Oſmond not only riſked your diſpleaſure, by far exceeding his limited income, and drawing largely upon you, but

lent

lent me the money with which he intended purchaſing his commiſſion."

Hamilton fell back in his chair; a deadly paleneſs ſucceeded the animated glow of gratitude, which diffuſed itſelf over his countenance, while he acknowledged his own errors, and elevated his friend's generoſity. Mr. Evans looked on Mr. Evington and Hamilton, with joy, yet mingled with vexation, as if to accuſe the one of want of friendſhip, by concealing the ſudden change in his finances; and with admiration on the other, for his noble confeſſion.—Mr. Evington appeared the moſt ſurprized of the three: he liſtened, and then gazed on Hamilton with earneſtneſs, partly ſuſpecting his mental faculties were deranged.

"Sir," rejoined Mr. Evington, "you amaze me! I know of no drafts, excluſive of thoſe for his commiſſion, which are yet unpaid; nor am I acquainted that in any

any way he outlived his income—you ſurely miſtake."

" No, no, ſir !" replied Hamilton, " I am certain of what I advance, ſince I am at this moment his debtor for near five thouſand pounds."

" Impoſſible !" cried the aſtoniſhed father, while the feeble hand of Mr. Evans endeavoured to ſilence Hamilton, by preſſing it, though unavailingly, in his own ; and he now with extreme difficulty made an effort to expreſs himſelf.

" I die contented," ſaid he, graſping Mr. Evington's hand ; " Oſmond is worthy of my friendſhip—worthy of the beſt of fathers—I am not deceived—tell him—that my laſt wiſh couples him and Matilda together, that—No, ſend for him."

Mr. Evington deſired a ſervant in the antechamber to ſeek him. Oſmond inſtantly obeyed. On his knees he waited the dying pardon of his ineſtimable friend. Mr. Evans raiſed his head ; his eyes wandered

dered round the room, ſtill in ſearch of another object: "You wiſh your daughter"—he bowed aſſent—then turning to Oſmond, ſtrove to ſpeak, but his lips only moved: a convulſive ſmile ſpread itſelf over his features: his hands were cold and cloſed:—he ſhook his head as if to denote all was over!

Matilda tremulouſly approached him. Her extended arms encircled her dying parent: her watery eye caught the *laſt* languid look: ſhe came juſt in time to inhale his *laſt* mournful ſigh!—Thus did Mr. Evans take an eternal farewel of thoſe terreſtrial cares which ever ſurround the happieſt of mankind.

The phyſician had the preſence of mind to have poor Hamilton removed, expecting this awful criſis every moment.—Matilda ſtill hung on the dead body with Oſmond, who wept immoderately, and though not uſually relieved by tears, on this

this occaſion the fatal ſpear that deprived the worthy Mr. Evans of exiſtence, ſeemed to have pierced her ſoul at the ſame inſtant. She faintly articulated, " He's gone—my dear, dear father's gone !—O ! God! THY WILL BE DONE!" And ſunk in indeſcribable woe into the arms of the no leſs afflicted Mrs. Munſter.

CHAP-

CHAPTER. IX.

"The faculties of the mind, ſtrengthen by exertion, till they finally unnerve affliction, and triumph over it."

MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO.

THE ſtranger who had ſeparated the two combatants, continued to make conſtant enquiries after Hamilton's ſituation, who ſtill remained in imminent danger. A violent fever totally deprived him of his ſenſes, he raved perpetually—called himſelf the murderer of his friend's peace of mind—the cauſe of Mr. Evans death—a vile gambler—a wretched outcaſt—homeleſs, friendleſs—deſpiſed by ſociety—rejected by Jeſſy, and her parents!—

Oſmond watched unremittingly by his bed-ſide, and endeavoured to keep every other perſon as much as poſſible from witneſſing theſe frantic effuſions of the brain.

brain. In one of these paroxysms, Mr. Evington being in the chamber, heard him recapitulate what had passed in the interview with Mr. Evans, which escaped not Mr. Evington's memory; but he waited the recovery of Hamilton, to demand the elucidation of what appeared to him a mystery. The renewal, however, of the subject, created new conjectures, and with them fresh impatience to have them satisfied. He offered no longer to resist the temptation, and addressed his son, by mentioning what he already knew from Hamilton, adding, "I am not to learn that Mr. Evans presented you with the money for your commission; but you never drew any other drafts upon me, or if you did, they yet remain unpaid."

"Unpaid, sir!" exclaimed Osmond, "said you, unpaid!—God of Heaven! did you then refuse my notes, sir?"

"Those for your commission, I certainly did—Mr. Evans accepted them, in my absence—I know of no others—"

"Generous

" Generous man! from my ſoul I thank him; but I mean, ſir, two bills, at thirty days ſight, of two hundred pounds each, which, I confeſs, I had the temerity to draw upon you—yet do not ſay, my father, you refuſed payment—diſtraction is in the thought!"

" I have never ſeen them, I aſſure you; and now, my dear Oſmond, with ſorrow, I muſt inform you, that I am unable to pay them."

" Miſery! Miſery! cried Oſmond, ſtriking his forehead, then theſe bills yet remain to ſurcharge my wretchedneſs--here I muſt ſtay, or be thrown into a gaol."—Recollecting that his venerable tutor was perhaps detained there on his account, he became almoſt frantic.

" Oſmond, my ſon, be calm, nor ſuffer your good ſenſe to be hurried away before immoderate guſts of paſſion—never fear—misfortunes may ſink us deep in adverſity, but they ought rather to elevate than depreſs the mind.—While we glide ſmoothly

on

on the ſea of life, conducted by a ſkilful pilot, through its ſtraits, and we ſteer clear of the rocks, we are unacquainted with our danger, till it is overcome. If, indeed, from good fortune, we paſs with the current, unmoleſted by the ſtorms and billows of affliction, we may conſider ourſelves peculiarly happy. But we can attribute no merit to our own management, we can arrogate no ſkill in the direction of our courſe, for we have had no trials of fortitude, of reſignation to combat with; we have had no ſtorms to weather; we have had no wrecks to bear up with; nor have we thereby been deſtitute of the neceſſaries of life. He, my ſon, who has had no misfortunes to ſurmount, has never had the power of teſtifying whether his ſucceſsful voyage through life ariſes from his own ſound judgment, or from the adventitious gales of proſperity.—No, Oſmond, 'tis when we are ſurrounded by perils, menaced on all ſides by deſtruction, when pale-faced poverty ſtares us in the

face, when giant neceſſity confines our inclinations, with barriers ſtrong as iron, and every thought is controuled within his relentleſs gripe; when the beckoning hand of time ſnatches our neareſt and beſt friends to the eternal manſion of peace; when pitileſs death yawns over our own heads, and tyranically baffles all reſiſtance; *then*, my ſon, comes the momentous criſis! *then* let us evince true ſuperiority of mind; *then* let us dignify our actions, by ſupporting the preſſure of temporary evils like *men*. While the irreſiſtibility of fate, hurls us before the impending ſtorm, whatever be our doom, let us not forfeit our courage. The gale that drives us to day on the quickſands of terror, may tomorrow waft us to the land of proſperity —ſhall I ſay, ſhame upon my Oſmond! No—recollect you have a mother, a dear ſiſter, to conſole by your example. *They*, my ſon, are greater ſufferers from this loſs than we can be: yet I will venture to aſſert,

aſſert, they will not repine at the diſpenſations of Providence."

"Nor does your ſon, ſo far as regards himſelf; but when to my knowledge, the beſt of friends ſuffers ignominy on my account — Oh! ſ'death, and perdition!" cried Oſmond, clapping his hand to his forehead.

"To whom do you allude, Oſmond? Confide in your father—perhaps it may be in his power to relieve this exceſſive anxiety of mind."

"Queſtion me not, my dear ſir, I conjure you: your wiſhes to relieve, do but aggravate my miſery."

As Oſmond's perturbation encreaſed, Mr. Evington became more earneſt to wreſt this thorny ſecret from his boſom, but finding it inſcrutable, he committed him to the care of his affectionate ſiſter.

The ſtranger who felt ſo intereſted in young Hamilton's recovery, hearing that

he ſtill remained in the moſt imminent danger, and having much to impart of very material conſequence, now requeſted a private audience with Mrs. Munſter: being admitted, he entered ſomewhat confuſed.--"If I miſtake not," ſaid the gentleman," addreſſing her, "I have had the pleaſure of ſeeing Mrs. Munſter at Bengal."

"It is poſſible, ſir; many years back I reſided there."

"I perceive time has effaced me from that memory, where circumſtances compelled me to wiſh it ſhould, notwithſtanding my ambition aſpired, otherwiſe, to deſerve your eſteem."

Mrs. Munſter appeared agitated. The ſcenes ſhe had witneſſed at Bengal, ruſhed anew on her mind, and brought with them numberleſs painful recollections. "I paſſed many unhappy days, ſir, in the eaſt, and yet acquired many friends, whom I ſhould feel diſtreſſed to have forgotten: your countenance

countenance is certainly familiar to me, ſorry am I to ſay, not ſufficiently ſo for me to remember your name or perſon."

"Perhaps, Madam, when they are better known you will confeſs that oblivion for once befriended you—if unfortunately the will of chance made me deprive you of one relative, I am recompenſed in being inſtrumental to the reſtoration of another —ah! Madam, recoil not from my ſight, until you hear the juſtification I have to offer; your noble ſoul will pity and forgive."

Mrs. Munſter now recollected in the perſon of Colonel Fitz-James, the ſame officer who had fought with and killed her huſband. His bleeding corpſe ſeemed to ſtare her in the face, as ſhe looked upon his murderer. The flattering hope that had Mr. Munſter lived, experience might have chaſtiſed, corrected, and ſtill have made him all that her fond heart believed him to be previous to their marriage, ſtrongly

came acroſs her mind: beſides which her child would have been reſtored to her maternal arms—that ſon ſhe inceſſantly lingered after, and whoſe fate ſhe pined to learn. Theſe, with other fallacious hopes and fears, had often occupied her waking thoughts, while her midnight ſlumbers were no leſs haunted with the image of her infant ſon, and his father's phantom. Frequently in the viſions of ſleep, ſhe beheld him ſupplicating forgiveneſs, and fancied ſhe heard him reprobate his own miſconduct by the moſt repentant language: ſuch illuſive dreams often diſturbed her reſt; but her ſtrength of mind was of that magnitude, that ſhe diſregarded them in the morning, and had ever forbore mentioning them to her friends. They now occurred more vividly to her memory, and potently crowded her imagination, as ſhe gazed upon Colonel Fitz-James*. She ſpoke not; a viſible emotion of ſilent horror was depictured on every fea-

* The officer mentioned in vol. I. page 83.

ture;

ture; an irreſiſtible movement raiſed her hands before her face, as if to hide him from her ſight; while her fixed eye darted forth reproof and indignation. She continued a few moments in this attitude—a bluſh of ſurpriſe had ſpread itſelf upon her cheek, which faded gradually away, as her recollection yielded to the melancholy retroſpection of thoſe ſcenes his preſence renewed; the page of all her ſorrows, ſeemed to lay open before her, and the tears of grief appeared to have bliſtered the paper, only to render the traces of woe more conſpicuous.

Colonel Fitz-James forebore to moleſt the accuteneſs of her feelings, by adding a word either in juſtification of himſelf, or of the purport of his viſit; in reſpectful ſilence, his eyes caſt down, conſcious of apparently deſerving her cenſure, he waited permiſſion to proceed.

At length Mrs. Munſter withdrew from

her poſture of horror, and ſhrunk back in the chair, caſting a contemptuous glance, and ſhook her head; then with low and tremulous accent, rejoined, " My huſband's murderer!—and you come, ſir, to inſult his hapleſs widow by your preſence—this is too much. I could forgive you when from my ſight; but this intruſion opens every wound, and renders you doubly culpable:—what atonement have you to offer? what compenſation has Colonel Fitz-James to make the unfortunate mother—for the loſs of a child too, dear as life—perhaps his total ruin!—None! none! ſir! worthy my acceptance.'

" Madam, you doubtleſs will allow, that compulſion alone induced me to meet Mr. Munſter: my honour was alſo dearer to me than life—I lamented there ſuggeſted no poſſible means of retrieving that, by any palliations leſs dangerous, ſince it proved ſo detrimental to your happineſs: there were *none* on my part practicable; and Mr. Munſter would offer no other compenſation:

compenſation: the chances were equal, and it was my misfortune to outlive your eſteem.—By unwearied diligence I have ſought to make ſome recompence, but till this laſt week, have been unſucceſsful. If the knowledge that *your ſon* lives, madam, lives an ornament to ſociety, be conſidered as ſuch."—

"Ha! my ſon, ſaid you! my ſon lives! and deſerving!—O! repeat it, ſir!—where!—where!—"

"When I found Mr. Munſter had expired, I was obliged to quit Bengal immediately: I bluſh not to own your amiable conduct ſtrengthened my attachment to you—*you* were the univerſal topic of converſation, and the loſs of your ſon, claimed every body's intereſt. I then reſolved never to relinquiſh my ſearch until I traced him out. About two years after your departure from Bengal, I viſited America: walking one day in the ſuburbs of Philadelphia, I was overtaken by a violent ſtorm and entered a ſmall hovel, to take

ſhelter. The exceſſive poverty of the inhabitants is beyond deſcription:—there were four ſmall children, and two women, in a room not ten feet wide; a little ſtraw compoſed their bed; nearly naked, they were dining off a miſerable meal of brown bread, and a few vegetables. The eldeſt child particularly attracted my notice: his appearance beſpoke him of diſtinction, though in the utmoſt poverty. I queſtioned the elder of the women concerning her ſituation, and by a ſmall gift, induced her to diſcloſe it. I then learnt that her huſband had received a ſum of money to take care of that child; with a ſolemn promiſe of being conſtantly ſupplied with a ſufficiency to maintain it, and to recompence the man for his trouble, the boy being then an infant, and could ſcarcely prattle. He undertook the charge, and brought him home to his wife: having then no family of their own; during the firſt year they ſpun out their little ſtock, with the earnings of their mutual labour, which enabled them to

live comfortably, always anxiouſly looking out for the ſtranger's return—But the next year paſſed without a repleniſh, with an additional child of their own to maintain.—The year following the expences attending the poor woman's confinement with her ſecond child, compelled them to relinquiſh their then comfortable dwelling for one much inferior. The third year brought with it freſh calamities, and ſunk them ſtill lower—'Even then,' ſaid the good woman, as ſhe looked firſt on her children, then round her miſerable habitation, 'I was happy to what I now am; for I had the pleaſure of ſharing our labours with an affectionate huſband, who though accuſtomed to enjoy plenty, ſubmitted without murmuring to the change: we conſoled each other; and he has often ſaid,' continued the woman, 'that he would ſooner live upon bread and water, ſweetened by the ſmile of domeſtic comfort, than drink the beſt wines at a noble-

man's table, ſoured by the wrangling of diſcord—' "

" But my ſon! my ſon!" interrupted Mrs. Munſter; " let me learn more of him —bleſſings attend this good woman if ſhe preſerved him!—Excuſe my impatience, ſir—"

" Your impatience is natural, madam—yet I muſt be allowed to proceed ſyſtematically; and to render my little hiſtory methodical, ſuffer me to relate the remainder as I have began, nearly in her own words."

Mrs. Munſter begged him to proceed.

" ' Our neighbours,' continued the woman, ' blamed us for not ſending the poor little orphan to the work-houſe; but my huſband loved the little fellow, and called him his own: I promiſed to protect him, ſays he, and I *will:* had his father or his friend kept his word, they would have enabled me to treat him better, but perhaps have loved him leſs: he muſt therefore ſhare the ſame fate with my own. And ſo he has,

has, ſir, though it is but a ſorry one, and promiſes to be worſe; for *I* have juſt had the greateſt misfortune fate could inflict, the loſs of the beſt huſband, father, and friend. The cruel ſteward of our landlord arreſted him; he was confined a few days, till a friend lent him enough to pay our half-year's rent, and he returned to his family, but with a violent cold; the anxiety of his mind created much fever, of which he lingered a month and died. I was indeed very miſerable: my ſiſter here,' pointing to the other woman, 'condeſcended to viſit my wretchedneſs, and ſhare my ſorrows, until I am able to reſume my labour."

"Such, madam," continued Colonel Fitz-James, "is nearly literally the account ſhe gave me in the artleſs rhetoric of ſimple truth. Her modeſt appearance, in my opinion, ſufficiently confirmed her words; for though habited in coarſeſt apparel, it hid not the pureſt of hearts, which beamed gentleneſs and good humour around her. With tender reluctance

ſhe

ſhe ſuffered me to take the little orphan under my care. My own fortune was too ſmall to do as much as her melancholy ſituation demanded; yet more than enough to ſupport myſelf, and I determined it ſhould alſo the child: moreover I ſpoke to the landlord of the hut, appriſing him at the ſame time of the ſteward's barbarity towards this deſolate family. It gave me infinite pleaſure to find the proceeding was not countenanced by his maſter, who expreſſed his abhorrence of ſuch oppreſſion. This gentleman, however, ratified his words by his actions. He not only diſmiſſed his land-ſteward, but placed the widow and her little family in a comfortable cottage, rent free, furniſhed them with money to repair the wreck misfortune had made—my adopted child was put to ſchool, while I continued to make the circuit of Europe. I was told he preferred a ſea-faring life, and I deſired his ſtudies might be directed accordingly. At an early age he was made a midſhipman,

ſince

ſince which a variety of incidents from my being in the army, and he in the navy, operated as if conjointly to prevent our meeting, but we correſponded regularly. He ever expreſſed the higheſt ſenſe of gratitude for my care, and the little yearly ſtipend he ſtill receives from me. I underſtand that he has obtained promotion in the Britiſh ſervice, and I was going to England in queſt of him, when I received a letter from a friend in Bengal, identifying that the youth I ſtill foſtered and had educated, to be the ſame I was in ſearch of, your ſon, madam."

"Ah, ſir!" exclaimed Mrs. Munſter, falling on her knees, "receive a fond mother's gratitude, alas! the only thing ſhe has to offer, with the tears of heartfelt joy—O my ſon! my ſon!—where ſhall I find him, ſir? that he lives, and in health, is ſuch unexpected good fortune, that I ſcarcely know if I could ſupport an interview, even were he near, but you ſay he is in England. Think me not importunate

if

if I requeſt to learn how my dear ſon got to America?"

"You ſhall immediately, madam, by this letter, which I will read to you.—

"'YES, my dear friend, that little fellow who has ſo often been the ſubject of your welcome epiſtles, is the indentical ſon of the deceaſed Munſter. Yeſterday being called upon to attend a ſick patient, I found the man on the verge of eternity: know ing him to be in good circumſtances, I requeſted to learn whether his affairs, in caſe of a diſſolution, were ſettled. He aſſured me there could be no occaſion for that unneceſſary trouble, as he felt certain he ſhould recover; in conſequence I deferred preſſing the queſtion. On the ſucceeding day I found him conſiderably worſe, and again expreſſed ſome apprehenſions of what might happen, yet extraordinary as it may appear, he diſbelieved my aſſertions as improbable, if not impoſſible. From ſome of his family, which

was

was numerous, I learnt that his friends had been perſuading him to make a will, but could not prevail, and that in caſe he died without one, the greater part of his property would devolve to a diſtant relation. On repeating my viſit, I felt convinced that he could not ſurvive many hours: I candidly expreſſed as much—'Sir, you are quite deceived,' ſaid he fretfully, 'I feel even better than I have done for this month.' 'That is no proof againſt my aſſertion, and painful as it is to my feelings, I muſt repeat, ſir, you cannot live twelve hours.' 'Sir,' replied the ſick man, 'I know my family have prevailed upon you to ſay ſo, merely to frighten me into making my teſtament; and the moment that is commenced, I know very well I ſhall die; therefore, ſir, as I really wiſh to live, and I know that *live I ſhall*, you, nor they, nor all the world, can perſuade me to the contrary.' I bowed miſtruſtfully, ſaying, I hoped he might find my judgment fallacious: he ſmiled, and I left him.

About

About three hours after my departure came a meſſenger deſiring me inſtantly to attend my patient; not that he thought himſelf worſe, but he wiſhed to converſe with me. --'Sir, 'ſaid the ſick' man, you are ſtrongly impreſſed with the idea that I ſhall die; whatever may be my reverſe of opinion, there is one circumſtance which before I even make my will, if it muſt be made, I wiſh you to be acquainted with. A friend of mine was entruſted with the care of an infant, and the father of it promiſed to pay regularly for its board. This man was then bound to America, where he traded, his wife accompanied him: they took the child with them, and ſome time afterwards they returned to Bengal, telling me they had placed the boy comfortably, and were going to ſettle in America. *I* then owed this man fifty pounds; being at that period very poor, he generouſly refuſed accepting the ſum until he returned again from America. On his paſſage, unfortunately the veſſel ſunk, and all the crew periſhed.

periſhed. From no means could I ever learn tidings of this unfortunate orphan; I ſuppoſed the father traced him out, whoſe name is Munſter, but the child went by the name of Hamilton: if that is the caſe, he may be well provided for, if not, I would wiſh that child ſhould have this fifty pounds, which I now depoſit in your hands, becauſe among the concourſe of different patients you viſit, you may from enquiry hear of the circumſtance: if not, at your deceaſe, you will be ſo kind as to bequeath it to ſome male orphan among the poor deſerving your bounty'—I accepted the charge, and informed him where the youth was, with every circumſtance appertaining to this diſcovery. The ſick man evinced much pleaſure; but the exertion ſomewhat haſtened his laſt hour. Death ſmiled upon the gift, and ſeemed as if he had only waited till it was bequeathed. My patient confeſſed himſelf alarmed, and ſent for a notary—but *too late!* for he loſt the power of ſpeech before his arrival, to the ruin

and

and misfortune of his family. Thus does weak ſuperſtition enervate the mind, until the faculties of reaſon are unhinged and it ſpreads its baneful ſeeds of miſery for generations.' This is all that alludes to my dear protegee, William Hamilton," ſaid colonel Fitz-James inadvertently.

"Hamilton! ſaid you--Hamilton?" exclaimed Mrs. Munſter in an agony—"beneath the ſame roof with his mother! O my ſon! my ſon! am I to find thee juſt expiring? My dear William!"

Mrs. Munſter found her ſpirits too greatly agitated, to expreſs the ſentiments of gratitude that were ſtrongly excited in her boſom. She roſe to give effuſion to the fulneſs of her heart, requeſting Colonel Fitz-James would call the next day.

In this ſtate of mind we leave Mrs. Munſter to combat alone, in the receſs of uninterrupted reflection, the various paſſions that are awakened in her maternal breaſt; truſting

truſting that the ſame ſtrength of mind that enabled her to ſupport the ſevereſt miſfortune, will, in the preſent inſtance, teach her to eſtimate this unexpected bleſſing, though the arrow of death points near the bed, and threatens its forfeiture in the ſame hour; while we return to Oſmond and Maria, whom we left together.

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.

"That done, ſhe knelt and rais'd her eyes to heav'n,
Her pierceing eyes, dark as her adverſe fortune;
Breath'd a ſhort pray'r, and like a ſpotleſs flow'r
Bow'd by the pitileſs and pelting ſtorm,
Sunk to the earth, and died."

MARY ROBINSON'S SICILIAN LOVER.

"I HAVE now, Maria," ſaid Oſmond, "unburthened my full heart, and confided its ſorrow to your generoſity—Have I not cauſe to be miſerable? my pecuniary ſituation, you will allow, forced me to renounce dear Matilda's hand—that moſt precious gift of Heaven!—or, appear in the eyes of a mercenary world, a *fortune-hunter:* for I cannot publiſh it in the Gazette that I loved this angel-like woman, when I could have doubled her pounds! and that had I a thouſand to each of her guineas, they ſhould be at her command. Were I to repair inſtantly to England, and prevail

on

on my brother, Sir George Beaufort, to aſſiſt me, it would be involving myſelf even more deeply with my revered friend, Doctor Orton, than at preſent, for thoſe two unfortunate bills, which my father has not accepted, will appear moſt ſurely againſt me. Beſides I have reaſon to believe our brother George is as much embarraſſed as any of us, from that damn'd lawſuit between him and Sir Stanhope, which has drained him of almoſt every ſhilling, and he not a bit the forwarder, or ever will be. Would he only be adviſed, not to throw any more money away to enrich his lawyer and impoveriſh himſelf! The remainder of Emma's fortune is reduced by our late calamity to a trifle; I am therefore unwilling to aſk a favour which muſt conſiderably inconvenience themſelves. Indeed, I muſt ſell my commiſſion."

"Indeed you muſt not; for I tell you that *I* have it in my power to ſupply the ſum requeſted to extricate Doctor Orton, and have it you ſhall, Oſmond," ſaid Maria,

Maria, haſtily leaving the room, and entering Matilda's, of whom ſhe borrowed part of that ſum as for her own uſe, and, with what ſhe had herſelf, folded it up, and ſlipt it on her brother's table, while he ſat by Hamilton's bed-ſide. Then returning to her friend's chamber, communicated ſuch part of Oſmond's converſation as was calculated to give Matilda pleaſure, and exonerate him from the imputation of deceit. Matilda, now more impreſſed in Oſmond's favour, felt the revival of her affection ſtrengthened by ſome words which Maria let fall, clearly elucidating that part of his conduct hitherto replete with myſtery. Maria propoſed taking the air in a carriage, obſerving the pale and dejected countenance of her friend, who ſince her lamented father's death, obſtinately refuſed leaving her room. For ſome time ſhe reſiſted every entreaty to accept the invitation; at length, ſomewhat wearied by Maria's importunity, Matilda conſented to accompany

pany her in a few hours. Maria embraced her affectionately, adding, "I will moleſt you no longer, dear Matilda; but let not this unavailing grief corrode upon your heart: it pleaſed the will of Heaven to take your worthy parent to his mercy, and we muſt, my ſweet friend, ſubmit patiently to his decrees."

"Heaven ſpare your's, my love!"—ſobbed Matilda—"leave me now, I beſeech you, good Maria; I ſhall recover when alone, and will endeavour to be ſufficiently compoſed to rejoin you at ſix o'clock."

Maria withdrew, the words "Heaven ſpare your's," vibrated on her ſenſes, and the falling tear bore teſtimony that were ſhe in Matilda's predicament, ſhe might, perhaps, demonſtrate leſs fortitude.

Matilda mourned the irreparable loſs ſhe had ſuſtained in ſecret, and with diurnal exactitude wept her lamentations over

her beloved father's coffin, which ſtill remained in the apartment wherein he died.

Hither ſhe reſorted, when Maria quitted her chamber: ſhe reclined her aching head on the ſad receptacle that contained his lifeleſs frame, and in tears exclaimed, "Bleſſed, bleſſed father! ſhall I then never more ſee that dear countenance?—never more catch from you the ſweet ſmile of approbation!—are thoſe eyes, indeed, cloſed for ever?—for ever! my dear, dear, excellent parent, is then no more!--Matilda will inceſſantly mourn his loſs, in remembering his virtues—Ye daughters of affliction! that weep from a ſimilar cauſe, renew your tears with me—for I have loſt a mother—a father too! and ſuch a father!" Then falling on her knees, ſhe raiſed her folded hands, ejaculating in ſolemn accents, "O merciful Creator! inſpire me with reſignation to thy divine will: hear the prayers of an

an hapleſs orphan.—As it pleaſed thee, great God! to take my bleſſed father to eternity, let me believe him enthroned in the manſions of celeſtial peace!—Enthroned as an angel of light!—Empower him, O! father of heaven! to watch over his afflicted daughter, in the hour of danger and temptation, and prevent her falling into evil.—O! Lord, thy will be done!"

Matilda roſe, ſhe wept abundantly, though relieved, in ſome meaſure, by this ſhort prayer, and retired to her own room, where ſhe prepared herſelf to meet Maria, who, at the appointed hour, informed her the carriage waited.

They then deſired the coachman to drive to any airy ſpot, leaſt frequented, particularly wiſhing to paſs unnoticed. A light evening's breeze now and then relieved the oppreſſive heat of the atmoſphere, and the pale lightning glimmered

at intervals in the weſt. Matilda propoſed to ſtop the carriage, and on foot accept the ſhade of a ſmall inviting wood, which the ſun-beams had not penetrated. Maria readily aſſented.—They ſtrolled onwards, mutually intereſted in their converſation—could it be otherwiſe, when the theme preſented a beloved object to the one, and a dear brother to the other, in the nobleſt character of human nature? — The ſweet notes of a female voice now arreſted their attention, chanting the well-known romance of *Nina*, and a favourite air of Matilda's. The ſound queſtionably was not diſtant, yet from whom they could not diſtinguiſh: "Let us," ſaid Matilda, "take this path, we may, perhaps, diſcover the fair ſongſtreſs." — They moved on, ſcarcely touching the ground, leſt the vibration of their footſteps ſhould be the tell-tale meſſenger of their approach. They perceived a ſmall elegant houſe in the very centre of this wood.

wood. Again they liſtened, the voice had ceaſed, for a while, then recommenced the air. The exquiſite melody of theſe plaintive notes penetrated Matilda's ſad heart. She complained of faintneſs, and ſeated herſelf on the graſs. The ſame voice continued the ſong with the moſt emphatic energy of ſoul; it came from the houſe, and ſeemingly from ſome one in the lower ſtory, where both windows were open: "Yes," ſaid Maria, "I am confident the perſon, whoever it may be, is in that room—what melting ſweetneſs of expreſſion!" — "I could fancy the voice celeſtial," ſaid Matilda, as the tears fell from either eye. At the ſame inſtant a beautiful female figure appeared at the window: her hair confined in a blue ſilk net—a looſe white dreſs hung in elegant drapery from her ſhoulders. Perceiving the two wanderers on the ground, ſhe made an attempt to haſten towards them, from the window, when a ſecond

perſon immediately led her from the ſpot: they both preſently joined Miſs Evington and Matilda. The duſk of twilight had already began to ſpread its ſombrous tints around, and rendered every object imperfect. The young woman gave each a hand, pointing to the houſe, ſinging at the ſame time, "*Hélas! kélas! le bien aimé ne revient pas!*" The perſon who attended her, ſupported her fragile frame, with viſible apprehenſion.—Maria politely declined accepting the invitation of returning with them, ſaying it grew late, and their carriage waited.—The ſtranger finding herſelf refuſed, turned to her attendant, and falling on her boſom, burſt into a flood of tears, from which ſhe did not recover until the other young woman, who, accuſtomed to theſe ſudden effuſions of ſorrow, drew out a miniature, and preſented it to her view, adding, "You muſt not weep, dear aunt—look here—*remember*."—The ſight of the medallion had the deſired effect.

effect. She reſumed her calmneſs, and warbled a few wild, yet delightful notes.—" Forgive my inattention, ladies," ſaid the young attendant; " if it would not put you to any great inconvenience to walk in, you might prevent my poor dear unhappy aunt many hours' diſtreſs.—She has lately experienced a cruel ſhock, by the death of a tenderly beloved friend; ſince which a melancholy madneſs has ſettled on her brain: ſhe ſeldom converſes; her only amuſement is ſinging one or two airs, which were great favourites of the deceaſed gentleman; but ſhe is good humoured, and meek as an angel: if contradicted, or thwarted in her inclinations, ſhe weeps for hours, or 'till ſhe obtains her point. The ſmalleſt diſappointment in any offered kindneſs, renders her particularly wretched; and the only ſucceſsful means I have found of quieting her ſpirits, is ſhewing her that miniature, which repreſents a brother,

who tenderly loved her when alive, and whom ſhe eſteemed as her greateſt benefactor."

"Is it thought ſhe will recover?" enquired Matilda—"The phyſicians ſay, madam, that provided her bodily ſtrength ſurmounts the grief which preys upon her mind, ſhe may; but that ſhe muſt be indulged in all her fancies, as much as poſſible: they expreſsly forbid any contradiction to be made uſe of, as it aggravates her ſorrow, and will thereby augment her malady. She eats ſo little, and grows ſo much weaker every day, that I confeſs I entertain little hopes of her recovery.—Alas! you know not, ladies, how dear ſhe is to me! You ſee her dreſs is more adapted for the drawing-room than for a ſick chamber; but her chief delight conſiſts in decorating her perſon. Since the gentleman's deceaſe, ſhe wears no colour but blue and white, which is adjuſted with the utmoſt

moſt care, and generally changed twice a day, notwithſtanding the tears always trickle down in torrents, whenever ſhe views herſelf in the mirror : yet, ſhe appears beſt pleaſed when ſhe looks *moſt* ill. Pray, ladies, come, or ſhe will be miſerable all night."

Matilda and Maria liſtened to this relation in ſurprize and ſympathy. Humanity now forbade them to decline the requeſt : they inſtantly obeyed ; pretending as they rejoined the ſufferer, they were much tired, and would, on recollection, accept the invitation with thanks. She embraced them with evident marks of gladneſs, and had the light permitted her o be noticed, her countenance was inſtantly illumined with a benignant ſmile of triumph. She extended her white hand, and taking Matilda's arm, ſaid faintly, " Bleſſed ſhall be the comforters in affliction—for they that are grieved, require many friends.—

I have none!" Another line of the Romance,

" Hélas! hélas! le bien aimé ne revient pas!"—

finiſhed her ſpeech, warbled in the ſweeteſt notes of enthuſiaſm.

They entered the parlour: ſeveral muſical inſtruments formed part of the furniture.—She touched firſt one, then another, in rapid ſucceſſion, drawing forth tones of *maddened* ſorrow; but invariably concluded with the air of *Nina*, in full chords.

Candles were then ordered, by her expreſs deſire. She gazed a conſiderable length of time on Maria, with penetrating earneſtneſs. The latter, ſenſibly diſtreſſed at her melancholy ſituation, was attentively engaged in converſation with the attendant, enquiring how long ſhe had been deranged.——" About a week," replied the young woman—" You have, doubtleſs, heard of the duel two gentlemen fought lately at Bruſſels?"—

" But

" But neither of them were killed, I am informed," ſaid Maria, who was then unacquainted that Melcourt had been a party.

" The gentleman I allude to, only ſurvived a few hours," whiſpered the attendant, barely ſufficient to exonerate the other gentleman, whom he proteſted to be innocent, before ſeveral witneſſes; and, moreover, confirmed it in his own hand-writing, by declaring that he forced him wantonly to the act."

The candles being placed, the unfortunate ſufferer ſtill gazed on Maria, at whoſe feet ſhe fell, as ſoon as the light confirmed her ſuppoſition, exclaiming—" Yes, yes, 'tis her!—ſhe is come to mourn the loſs of my beloved!—we will weep together.—See, how he looks upon us!—but he deſerted me for *you*. Oh yes, for *you!*—it was not kind—indeed, my beloved Melcourt, it was unkind."—

She then hid her face in the gown of Maria, who now recognized the hapleſs Adeline de Choiſeul, and hearing abruptly that 'twas Melcourt fought and died, ſhe fell in ſenſeleſs grief on a chair. —Adeline's niece raiſed her unfortunate aunt from the ground;—raiſed her to cloſe her fine eyes, to weep no more.—As ſhe roſe, ſhe looked upon Maria's livid features, caught her hand, but finding it cold, ſhe gave one piercing ſhriek, and expired!

Enough had now been ſaid to acquaint Matilda, with what before ſhe had been only partially informed of.—Faint, and almoſt exhauſted herſelf, ſhe could give very little help to the two lifeleſs beings before her: her firſt ſtep was to ſend for a phyſician, who when he arrived pronounced the hapleſs maniac beyond all earthly care; and as ſoon as Maria recovered, hurried her in the carriage, that ſhe might not witneſs

neſs another ſcene of a nature perhaps more diſtreſſing. " No ſight," added the phyſician, addreſſing Matilda, " however dreadful or afflicting, injures the conſtitution equal to that corroding diſtreſs which preys upon the mind, and originates in a diſappointment of the heart. Indeed, madam, the moſt inveterate diſeaſe of the body is eaſier removed than any malady which primarily ariſes from the heart : I am a daily witneſs to the ravages of this diſorder."

Matilda finding the worthy phyſician inclined to expatiate on the inefficacy of medicinal aid to a wounded ſpirit, ſignified her deſire to depart; recommending the lifeleſs Adeline to the affectionate niece, and the latter to the phyſician's peculiar attention.

Mrs. Evington waited her daughter's return with the utmoſt impatience; her fancy had conjured up already a variety of

of accidents that muſt have befallen one or the other. Her huſband had gone in ſearch of them, juſt as they entered the court-yard. Yet the fond mother's imagination, however fertile at invention, in the melancholy and horrible, had not conceived an event replete with ſo much affecting diſtreſs as the one lately experienced, or one more calculated to deeply penetrate the heart, or to probe her daughter's feelings. On hearing the circumſtance related, ſhe commiſerated with Maria, and lamented the trial they muſt have ſuſtained, which their deſpondency tacitly avowed; yet this accident proved, in ſome meaſure, of benefit to Matilda, whoſe affectionate endeavours to ſoothe her friend's anguiſh of mind diſperſed her own ſadneſs and grief; meliorated into reſignation to the diſpenſations of our heavenly Father.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XI.

" The Gods are juſt———
But how can finite meaſure infinite?
Reaſon! alas! it does not know itſelf!
Yet man, vain man, would with this ſhort-lin'd plummet
Fathom the vaſt abyſs of heav'nly juſtice!
Whatever is, is in its cauſes juſt,
Since all things are by fate—"

DRYDEN.

MRS. Munſter never quitted her ſon's chamber: the new-made happy mother, like an adminiſtering angel, attended him night and day, even to the detriment of her own health, though ſhe participated the diſtreſſing ſituation of her friends, inaſmuch as they unfeignedly partook of her unexpected joy; yet while the recovery of one ſo eminently dear to her, remained doubtful, her thoughts

thoughts were abſtracted from every other object.

Thus ſituated, the Evington family were neceſſitated to protract their intended journey through Holland, from whence they reſolved to embark for England. As the mournful attendance of Mr. Evans', and, poſſibly, Mr. Munſter's coffin, muſt render the journey oppreſſively dull, Mr. Evington rather choſe to return through Holland, that new ſcenes, and new objects he hoped might attract their attention; and prevent the painful retroſpection which might occur on retracing the road to Oſtend, where Mr. Evans enlivened the circle. Mr. Melcourt's death, ſuggeſted another ſtrong inducement to haſten young Munſter from Bruſſels, when with ſafety he could be removed, if he ſurvived. The opening of Mr. Evans' will, had, at his daughter's requeſt, been deferred from day to day, till Mr. Evington, his executor,

ecutor, again intimated that it muſt be done. Matilda could not, with propriety, adduce any cogent diſſuaſive, and conſented to the awful writing being read, which, as well for its brevity, its generoſity, and, perhaps, its peculiarity, we ſhall inſert in full.

Auguſt the 24th, 1793. Dated Bruſſels.

" *To my Executor, Byron Evington, and my Executrix, Louiſa Munſter, are theſe laſt injunctions ſolemnly addreſſed, as my ſole Will and lawful Teſtament.*

" *My dear friends!*

" *I am digreſſing from the eſtabliſhed rules of inditing a poſthumous letter, or teſtament, becauſe the uſual manner, however correct it may appear in Doctors Commons, is, in my opinion, often very unintelligible to thoſe it moſt directly concerns. I therefore diveſt myſelf of the idea that when this is read I ſhall be no longer with you, but conſider myſelf as converſing with you ſeverally, and already fancy*

you

you aſſembled ready to enforce my wiſhes. As to you, my moſt beloved and moſt affectionate daughter, I deſire you will, at my expreſs command, take poſſeſſion of my income, amounting to four thouſand pounds per annum, in the Bank of England, and ſhare it with the man of your affections, unbiaſſed, uncontrouled by perſuaſions of any kind, or from any perſon living, conſult your own dear heart—"

"Forbear! forbear!" interrupted Matilda, "for Heaven's ſake pauſe a while! I cannot ſupport this—O! my father!" —ſhe fell on Mrs. Evington's boſom, in an agony of grief: the reading was conſequently for a ſhort time deferred. Oſmond, nearly as much affected as herſelf, had ſcarcely taken his eyes from fixing her dejected countenance, he now at her feet requeſted ſhe would accept a glaſs of water; having done which, ſhe collected her wonted firmneſs ſufficiently to hear the remainder of the will:

conſult your own inclination, and refer both to your own good judgment; your happineſs has ever been my ſole wiſh, and to be happy, my ſweet Matilda, we muſt love and be beloved. When you are thoroughly convinced of both—mind I expreſsly repeat, when you are convinced of both, ratify the conviction by an immediate union with the object of your choice. If he poſſeſs riches, make a good uſe of them together; if not, four thouſand pounds a year is ſufficient to make you both ſupremely bleſt in pecuniary matters; and if ye are not, ye will deſervedly be otherwiſe, as it muſt ariſe from extravagance or diſcontent. I deſire two thouſand of this money to be irrevocably at your own diſpoſal: your huſband may do what he pleaſes with the other; but two thouſand muſt, by my orders, on forfeiture of half the eſtate to your neareſt relation, remain at your command. If the perſon you marry be a good man, he will approve of this arrangement; for you will ſhare it with him, and your children equally. If he be a mercenary one, or a ſpendthrift, it is fit you ſhould be provided

for.

for. Exclusive of this property, I have money in the three per cent consols, yielding four hundred per annum, two of which Mrs. Munster will either receive yearly, or the sum total. The rest I desire to have sold out, and equally devided with my dear young friend, Osmond Evington, his good sister, Maria Evington, and his friend, William Hamilton; because I believe the latter is distressed in his finances. I present Sir George Beaufort's infant heir, Osmond William Beaufort, with the small estate on the banks of the river Thames, as a testimony of the affection I bear the father and mother.

"And now, Osmond Evington, I address you in particular: when you were at Plymouth you unadvisedly drew upon your father, first for your commission, then again for four hundred pounds; where did you suppose, young man, he could find this sum, without injuring your mother and sister? fortunately for you, it has done neither: I had previously resolved to present you with your commission, and chance made me acquainted with the intended purpose of the latter, whereby they are

paid,

paid, and you heartily welcome: only, my dear boy, let not in future the impulſe of generoſity lead you to promiſe or undertake more than on reflection your abilities allow you to fulfil with juſtice to yourſelf and friends: continue equally deſerving, and be as good a huſband to the woman you ſelect as you are a ſon, and have been a friend. Remember the firſt bleſſing in the world is an amiable wife; and a good man may generally poſſeſs that treaſure.

Now my worthy eſteemed friend and executor, Byron Evington, there is a young lady, by the name of Jeſſy Montgomery, whom I am told is attached, but againſt her mother's approbation, to Mr. William Hamilton, the gentleman in this houſe, becauſe they are both fortuneleſs: I wiſh you to ſee Mrs. Montgomery; if that is the caſe, and the only objection, you will tell her, that as I underſtand theſe two young people have been long cemented by affection to each other, with her permiſſion, and on giving her conſent to their being united in holy matrimony, I beg Miſs Jeſſy Montgomery's acceptance of the little ſum encloſed in a letter addreſſed

dreſſed to her in my eſcritoir, to commence houſe-keeping. If Mrs. Montgomery obſtinately refuſes, without any juſt imputations in Mr. Hamilton's diſfavour, you will give it the young lady to do as ſhe pleaſes with; provided ſhe does not marry any one againſt her inclination, either for mercenary, private, or family reaſons. The contents of the other letters in the ſame deſk, I requeſt the favour of Byron Evington and his excellent wife to accept as a ſmall tribute of remembrance, as well as I do my ineſtimable friend Mrs. Munſter, the more than mother to my beloved Matilda, unto whoſe care with eternal gratitude, ſhe is earneſtly recommended, with my fervent prayers, that ſhe may yet be bleſt with a ſon's affection as much as I have been in a daughter's.

Before I bid ye all an eternal farewel, I requeſt Mrs. Louiſa Munſter, my executrix, will diſtribute among the faithful ſervants, and ſuch other dependants as ſhe knew me attached to, a ſmall token of my acknowledgment of their fidelity, and long-tried honeſty de-

ſelves:

ſerves: a letter to that purpoſe will enable her to accompliſh this wiſh, among the others before mentioned.—The eſtate of Evans' Hall, in hereditary ſucceſſion on the male branch, devolves to James Evans, my eldeſt nephew, and at his death to my grandſon, in caſe I ſhould have any by my dearly-beloved daughter Matilda.

"Now, deareſt friends, farewel!—if my bleſſing is worth your receiving, accept it from my ſoul. May the happineſs I hope to enjoy when ye peruſe this, prevent your tears! Be a friend to my child, my ſweet Matilda: do not grieve, deareſt love, but ever remember your affectionate father with tenderneſs.

"CECIL EVANS."

Every eye manifeſted in lucid drops of heartfelt anguiſh, how beloved is a good man, and how bitterly he is lamented. Not a word interrupted the awful ſilence. The tears rolled down their

their cheeks, and bathed their hands unnoticed, as if the action of wiping them away might intrude upon the profound attention they ſeemed mutually by inſtinct to obſerve. Every faculty was in reverential ſuſpenſe, until thoſe parts which ſeparately addreſſed the perſons preſent, forced from them the ſigh of gratitude, who ſeemed more oppreſſed by the generoſity of the departed, than gratified by their own good fortune.

At length came the concluſive pauſe: Mr. Evans' attorney finiſhed, and every ſenſe of feeling and of thought remained truly alive to acknowledge the teſtator's ſuperior excellence. Yet no tongue had power to expreſs the ſmalleſt feeling of their heart, which tears alone atteſted, and it rather ſeemed the moment of renewed ſorrow.

Mr. Evington had ſuffered this affecting ſcene to continue ſome minutes longer

longer than he wiſhed, becauſe he felt himſelf unable to check its progreſs, without evincing the contending tumults that diſturbed his own breaſt. He now aſſumed compoſure ſufficient to remind them that there were other duties to perform, which this exceſs of grief rendered impoſſible to comply with; beſides that it diametrically oppoſed the laſt injunctions of the deceaſed, it would alſo injure their health. "Be firm, my dear girls," continued Mr. Evington, addreſſing Matilda and his daughter, "I mean not to offer any philoſophical arguments at the preſent time, which your ſituation of mind could ill receive; but merely to obſerve, that no affection is demonſtrated by wiſhing a ſuffering perſon to live, who, we are confidently aſſured, is paſt recovery, and whom we know to be dragging on a lingering exiſtence. This condition, is then, indeed, pityable;—nor can his beſt wiſhers, expreſſive of true regard, deſire this life of ceaſeleſs pain pro-

longed. Such was our valuable friend's ſituation, my dear loves:—his exemplary conduct was too univerſally confeſſed and experienced, to leave us in doubt; but he has 'ere now received a celeſtial recompenſe in the boſom of our heavenly Father. Let our conſolations be derived from that unadulterated ſtream of hope in God, and we ſhall ceaſe to mourn, by imitating his example, and be deſerving a ſimilar regret. 'The *good ſhall be rewarded with a crown of glory*;' and then again—'*Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away, but my words ſhall not paſs away:*' will you not acknowledge theſe words are full of mercy," demanded Mr. Evington, while a radiant beam of renovated complacency ſhone upon his features, and illumined his countenance as he ſpoke, with the animation of convictive truth.

Matilda Evans felt the ſacred promiſe cheer her ſpirits. She even roſe, and

and with compoſure, aſſured Mrs. Munſter ſhe was able to attend her in her father's ſtudy, where they might inſpect the different papers.

This taſk being finiſhed, ſhe repaired to her own chamber, where no witneſs chid the tributary tears; ſhe wept over his well-known hand-writing, and at laſt with trepidation opened a ſmall packet to her direction, left in the ſame eſcritoir, containing various pieces of poetry, which Mr. Evans had at different times ſelected and compoſed. Among them, an elegy to the memory of her mother ſhe particularly valued: it was much effaced by time, and appeared to have been a conſtant pocket-book attendant, from its mutilated ſtate. With difficulty, ſhe cemented the fragments ſufficiently together, to tranſcribe them, as follows:

ELEGY.

Ceaſe, pretty warblers, ceaſe your ſtrain,
In ſilence pauſe!— my ſorrows ſhare;
For grief lies heavy at my heart,
And fills my breaſt with cank'ring care.

How oft' beneath this ſhady elm
I've gaily watch'd you friſk and play!
How oft' when perch'd upon the twig
I've trembled leſt it might give way!

Then ev'ry note-ſweet feather'd race
Fill'd with celeſtial ſong the air,
Swell'd on mine ear with dulcet ſounds,
And lull'd to reſt all earthly care.

No more, alas! the charm prevails,
No more your ſong hath pow'r to pleaſe;
Each note now vibrates on my heart,
Bereft of joy, of peace, of eaſe.

She who enlivened all my hours,
My happineſs, my joy, my life,
Is gone—for ever gone from me;—
The beſt, the moſt beloved wife!

Ceaſe, then, ye choriſters of love,
Droop all your heads, and mourn with me—
Oh, Nature, make an awful pauſe;
And own congenial ſympathy!

While

While Matilda bathed her father's papers with tears of ſympathizing regret, Mrs. Munſter, for the firſt time ſince ſhe knew Hamilton to be her ſon, retired to her own apartment, where ſhe paſſed a few ſorrowing hours in meditation, and on her knees fervently returned thanks for the guardian care of Providence towards herſelf, manifeſt in almoſt every circumſtance of her life; more eſpecially in the accompliſhment of her heart's principal wiſh, the reſtoration of her only chlid, and the repetition of divine favour through the means of Mr. Evans, whom ſhe eſteemed as her chief friend and benefactor. Eighteen years' knowledge of his character had only ſtrengthened her veneration of his juſt principles and benevolent heart; conſequently ſhe mourned his loſs with ſincere affliction.

The Evingtons were quite overpowered by the generous *ſouvenir* of their deceaſed friend. They retired. Mr.

Evington partly ſubdued his wife and daughter's feelings on the occaſion, by teaching them to conſider the beatitude ſuch a ſoul as Mr. Evans' muſt then experience.

Oſmond repaired immediately to his ſick friend's chamber, happy to find him aſleep, and ſat down in ſilence to ruminate over the foregoing ſcene. Mr. Evans had relieved him of a load of care; excluſive of the diviſion in the three per cents, whereby he was not only enabled to repay his ſiſter's generous loan, and to extricate the no leſs benevolent Doctor Orton, but reimburſe it with intereſt. Theſe pleaſing conſiderations, with the certainty of having received Mr. Evans' free pardon, even amidſt the ſincere regrets he gave to his loſs, created ſo many ſenſations of reviving pleaſure, that to appearance he ſeemed nearly deſtitute of thoſe feelings of acute ſenſibility, which in general ſtrongly marked his character.—

ter.—Oſmond, to his infinite ſatisfaction, remained unmoleſted by any intruder for a conſiderable time; he now heſitated for ſome minutes whether to interrupt his preſent reflections, which were comparatively happy, or to inveſtigate the pocket-book, that contained Matilda's ſcrap: the laſt impulſe ſtrengthened with the thought, and became reſiſtleſs. The cabinet of his treaſures was produced, and every atom of her writing repeatedly peruſed, and as often preſſed to his lips. Melancholy uſurped the throne of fleeting pleaſure; for pleaſure fled when the repoſitory of *ſcraps*, &c. made its appearance.—Oſmond ſighed, and again pocketed the book. The entrance of the ſurgeon now demanded his attention. Since Mr. Munſter's confinement he had not enjoyed ſo much repoſe, as ſeveral people were always obliged to hold him whenever the wound was dreſſed. He now awoke calm, and infinitely better, to the gratification of all preſent. The

doctor began to entertain hopes of his recovery: he ſeemed perfectly ſenſible, and enquired after all the family. Oſmond having ſatisfied his interrogations, at the phyſician's deſire left him alone, to communicate the favourable change to Mrs. Munſter, adding, that the doctor expreſsly forbade her making the relationſhip known to the invalid, until his convaleſcence was more eſtabliſhed.

The hourly amendment of young Munſter's health gave new ſpirits to all around; ſo much ſo, that Oſmond now determined to join his regiment. With this intention, he previouſly conferred with Maria in private, and told her, that he ſhould deprive himſelf of the laſt ſatisfaction, the bidding Matilda farewel; as in his, and her own no leſs diſtreſſed ſituation, though of a different nature, it appeared incumbent on him to prevent any circumſtance that would give her pain: "for, indeed, Maria, ſtrongly as unfavourable

favourable appearances concur againſt me, I ſometimes flatter myſelf, ſhe loves me," ſaid Oſmond.

" And why ſhould ſhe not, my dear brother? The evils of life, the viciſſitudes of fortune, may ſink us deep in adverſity, but 'tis our conduct, our ſentiments, our actions, that attach us to the amiable part of mankind; and by this adherence is my brother deſervedly dear to our Matilda, whoſe principles aſſimilate too nearly with your own, to fear, unleſs you change in nature, the ſmalleſt deviation on her ſide.—But I will not moralize away your time."

" Nay, you wrong me, dear Maria; for our ſentiments do indeed aſſimilate: your's bear evidence of much good ſenſe; I even feel myſelf degraded in your opinion, while you ſuppoſe me reſtleſs, or impatient to the voice of reaſon.—No, my ſweet ſiſter, affliction, penury, diſ-

eaſe, and the loſs of every worldly com fort, may indeed cruſh me to the earth; yet would I ſooner kiſs that earth I tread upon, and live upon the duſt my lips embraced, than ſtoop to do whatever my honour would contemn.—The man who is unable to ſubmit with propriety to the diſpenſations of Providence, is truly to be deplored."

Matilda here interrupted their converſation, on ſeeing a chaiſe at the door, and Oſmond ready equipped to depart. — She enquired, with aſſumed cheerfulneſs, " Did you then, ſir, propoſe, to ſteal a march on us ?"

" Such were my intentions, I confeſs," returned Oſmond, " becauſe I felt myſelf ſo overpowered by my enemy that I dared not truſt myſelf again in ſight of her deſtructive weapons ;—weapons which wound to the heart ; and as I can only make ſuch propoſals of capitulation

as

s are derogatory to my honour, and unworthy of my enemy's acceptance, I have reſolved to give up the conteſt until reinforced by new courage, new ſpirits, and freſh ammunition."

" When a ſoldier's courage fails him," rejoined Maria, " there can indeed be little hope of a victory."

" Perhaps, my dear ſiſter, the man who aſpires beyond his reach, who would poſſeſs the greateſt treaſure upon earth, is no more than juſtly puniſhed for his temerity, by loſing the victory, and by being enſlaved in the bonds of his tyrannical vanquiſher."

The expreſſive look which accompanied theſe words, pointedly at Matilda, though addreſſed to his ſiſter, ſufficiently proved, that, however his lips might pronounce the dictates of honour, by avowing his intention to renounce the conqueſt, his heart contradicted every

ſyllable, and confeſſed itſelf ready to ſurrender on any terms to the enemy.

Matilda was alſo too generous in her nature to know, that while in his opinion honour forbade him offering his hand, the tendereſt affection, and long-tried attachment, authorized her accepting it: ſhe alſo knew him reſolute and ſteady to his determination, even at the expence of his life if he once perſuaded himſelf it became neceſſary, to the preſervation of that honour. Accident had, in the preſent inſtance, cogently evinced this trait in his character; and by chance ſhe learnt he was upon the verge of ſtepping into the chaiſe, unknown to herſelf or any part of the family, ſave Maria, whom he imagined to be more ſecret in his confidence than ſhe proved herſelf, as ſhe had by ſtratagem detained him in argument, until an opportunity offered of letting Miſs Evans know

know of his intentions. Matilda trembled, but ſhe inſtantly obeyed the ſummons, pondering as ſhe went what to ſay, and how to introduce the purport of her intruſion. Chance favoured her wiſhes: Oſmond's ſurprize and ſuppreſſed joy on once more beholding the dear object of his affections, ſpread an intereſting confuſion over his fine countenance, that, before her entrance, wore a ſaddened gloom: his eyes beamed gladneſs, and love ſeemed to irradiate every word that fell from his lips.—"Tyrannical vanquiſher!" repeated Matilda, "am I to impute that epithet to myſelf? if ſo, I will in reality aſſume that character—Nay, I begin by impoſing ſilence: you have, Mr. Oſmond, from I know not what reaſon, ſtigmatized my name; you have defiled my reputation, by calling me tyrannical; you have, in various inſtances, given me infinite chagrin, beſides committing many outrages on your own peace of mind; you have often deſpoiled

ſpoiled your family of tranquillity; with numberleſs other offences, all of which demand reparation. — I will poſitively hear no vindication until I have done ſpeaking: in my deſpotic character I demand implicit obedience—the hour of retribution is come;—your conduct at Plymouth— at Ivy-bridge —the fatigue impoſed on your ſervant reſpecting a fooliſh piece of paper—the variety of incidents attending the perambulations of this identical piece of paper, and the whole of that buſineſs, are minutely known to me, excluſive of every action, previous to, and ſince my dear honoured father's deceaſe. On taking a deliberate retroſpection of the paſt, and, morally ſpeaking, judging therefrom the future, I am induced to enumerate your aggreſſions; and, in conſequence, to inflict a ſuitable penance. In my judicial capacity, I renounce all fees, I take no pecuniary acknowledgments: as your indictments are many, the exculpation or

atonement

atonement required will be of magnitude:—Do you plead guilty?"

Oſmond felt confounded: he neither knew what to ſay, or what to think: admiration and hope one minute impelled him to the act of catching her in his arms, and expoſing his ſituation; while timidity and reſpect, mingled with apprehenſion and ſurprize, fixed him motionleſs to the ſpot.—She repeated the queſtion, but words were denied him.

"Guilty, upon my honour," cried Maria, "to my certain knowledge, and I bear evidence to its veracity."

"I do, indeed, loveliеſt arbitrator, acknowledge myſelf your priſoner," cried Oſmond.

"Have you any vindication to offer?"

"I have; ſuch as condemns and exculpates me in the ſame breath."

"Name them," rejoined Matilda, in tremulous accents, her face crimſoned, as

as ſhe began to feel almoſt incapable of maintaining her aſſumed character.

" I have an accomplice in the miſdemeanors and tranſactions you mention, whoſe bewitching faſcinations impelled me to commit them; who has power to drive me to acts of madneſs, by a frown, and whoſe ſmile is dearer to me than the richeſt jems on earth: I dared once perſuade myſelf, this treaſure mine—but—"

" Enough! enough!" reſponded Matilda, " I know the reſt, and the *motives* which influenced you—I pronounce you guilty.—Your ſentence—to paſs the remainder of your life—with—with the —the accomplice of your follies."

" Well ſaid, moſt learned judge!" cried Maria.

" Superior excellence!" exclaimed Oſmond, falling on his knees in extacy of joy:—" Do you indeed condeſcend to offer me ſuch a prize? *I* that once offended

fended your preſence, in refuſing this ineſtimable treaſure, this beloved hand; where now lies all my fortitude?—my wonted pride! No, ſince Matilda deigns to give herſelf to her beggared friend, the world ſhall witneſs how dearly I eſtimate the prize; bleſſed with her I defy its utmoſt ſarcaſms:—my ambition, her love; my *honour*, her happineſs! On my knees, and on this naked ſword, theſe lips ſhall ratify the ſolemn vow."—Oſmond repeated his words, carrying the unſheathed weapon to his lips.

Matilda, in making the motion to raiſe Oſmond, imperceptibly found herſelf in the ſame attitude with her lover, and laying her hand on the conſecrated blade, exclaimed, "Thus do I ſwear, before heaven, that Matilda will endeavour to prove herſelf worthy of your oath!"

"'Tis done!" rejoined Oſmond, "heaven and earth bear witneſs, and my life ſhall

ſhall be the forfeiture when I violate this vow.—Now, thou angelic charmer," continued he, raiſing her—" now, moſt beloved of my ſoul, permit me to ratify the vow, by one forgiving embrace, while angels ſanction, yet envy me the favour."

Mr. and Mrs. Evington entered at this period. Oſmond flew to meet them. He informed his father and mother of what had paſſed, who were ſcarce leſs affected with the generoſity of the action, than was the enraptured lover. Mr. Evington tenderly folded the bluſhing author of their felicity in his paternal arms, the tear of joy ſparkled in his eye, notwithſtanding buſy memory reminded him at the ſame inſtant of his departed fortune. A pauſe of many minutes more impreſſively imparted their mutual ſenſations than the moſt laboured rhetoric. Mrs. Evington firſt preſſed her ſon, then her intended daughter to her fond

ſond heart: now trying to expreſs her feelings, now hiding her emotions in Maria's boſom, who, though doubtleſs the great promoter of this happy tranſaction, ſtood a ſilent obſerver, reaping her own recompence, by the delicious reward of ſelf-approbation.

Matilda felt the encreaſing ſilence gradually decline to an awful pauſe, by giving opportunity to reflect on thoſe ſubjects ſhe believed corroding on the family's ſpirits—their ſon's departure to join his regiment, and the more poignant remembrance of his being at preſent nearly deſtitute of fortune.—The reſiſtleſs ſigh Mr. Evington gave when embracing his ſon, accompanied by an expreſſive ſhake of the head, altogether confirmed her ſuggeſtions.

" My dear and beſt of friends," ſaid Matilda, addreſſing Mr. and Mrs. Evington, " whatever part in my conduct is productive

productive of happineſs to perſons ſo ineſtimably valuable as thoſe now ſurrounding me, muſt unqueſtionably render me ſupremely bleſt. That ſame rectitude, and juſtneſs of principle, which taught me to ſurmount the fooliſh punctilio's of miſconceived delicacy, induced me to convince the world that I would ſooner hazard its cenſure, than ſuffer an amiable character to become the ſelf-devoted victim of *honour*. I am nevertheleſs the firſt to promote and impoſe obedience to his duty: cogent reaſons demand it; my own ſituation precludes my being united to any perſon until my mourning is finiſhed.—Next to that, Ormond's leave of abſence has been ſo long protracted, that it becomes indiſpenſably neceſſary for him to join his regiment.—Accordingly, I would recommend you, my good friend, to fulfil your intentions directly: the parting hour, whether deferred or not, muſt come at laſt:

laſt: now, query, if the anticipation does not render it more painful?"

Oſmond expreſſed a wiſh to have it exemplified; but Matilda ſtated ſo many objections, and promiſed ſo faithfully to fill up the interval in correſponding, that her better judgment predominated.

Reviſiting Munſter, to whom, from what Mr. Evington had imparted reſpecting the conference with Mr. Evans, Oſmond attributed his actual happineſs, he briefly recapitulated the preceding metaphorical converſation with Matilda, and warmly acknowledged his obligations, previous to bidding him farewel.

He then took a ſhort but affecting leave of his friends, and earneſtly recommended his Matilda to their peculiar protection.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.

" La vertu même ici par ta bouche a parlé :

. . . . . .

Et mon cœur paternel renaît dans tes vertus.

. . . . . .

Je ne demande point le prix de mes travaux,
Quel prix plus doux pourroit flatter mon eſpérance!
Le ciel dans tes vertus a mis ma récompenſe."

GRESSET.

MARIA accompanied Matilda to her apartment; ſhe there poured forth her tenderneſs in the language of pure affection, rejoicing that her brother and family were reſtored to comparative peace and comfort. Matilda confeſſed ſhe felt an indeſcribable ſerenity, although the exertion of ſpirits which ſhe had ſummoned to ſupport her reſolution had nearly overpowered her ſtrength. That Oſmond was happy, redoubled every pleaſurable ſenſation in her boſom:—but that Oſmond was gone to the field of battle, where

where carnage ſtalks in every point of view, where momentarily he would be expoſed to the moſt perilous dangers, ſaddened each brighter proſpect, and hope itſelf ſeemed dark as the ſable habit ſhe wore for her deceaſed father.

Colonel Fitz-James, in conſideration of the melancholy events that had taken place at the hotel, abſented himſelf a ſhort time; he now made his re-appearance, and with true regard embraced his adopted ſon. Young Munſter had a due ſenſe of the countleſs favours his foſtering hand had beſtowed; but even the feelings excited by his gratitude fell ſhort of what he ſuffered in knowing himſelf guilty, by having wantonly gambled away the benefactions for which he was thus grateful. The keenneſs of this ſelf-accuſation would have almoſt expunged the crime in a mind leſs contrite than Munſter's, who now looked upon the remainder of his life as inſufficient to atone for

for the follies he had committed. Colonel Fitz James then made him acquainted with the principal tranſactions in that part of his youth, previous to his arriving in America, the death of his father, and of having traced out his mother, who ſtill lived; every word tended to heighten the eſteem he entertained for one ſo deſerving the higheſt commendations: — he enquired where his mother was, and in what circumſtances, with the eagerneſs and ſolicitude of one who had long deemed himſelf an orphan, and who unexpectedly meets in an affectionate parent, an indulgent friend; — it being a well-known truth, that, inaſmuch as parents expect obedience from their offspring, the appellation of father and mother in itſelf conveys with it tenderneſs and lenity towards our errors—wherefore, the child who is bereft of its parents, before he knew them to be good or bad, will always deplore their loſs, and linger after their affection.

Colonel

Colonel Fitz-James aſſured Munſter that in his mother were blended the moſt feminine virtue with great ſtrength of mind; the moſt amiable diſpoſition with the rareſt accompliſhments in the female ſex. Young Munſter panted to throw himſelf at her feet, and acknowledge ſuch a parent, without ſuppoſing Mrs. Munſter to be the perſon in queſtion. Her compliance, her unremitted aſſiduity and grateful attention, during his convaleſcence, wrought in his mind thoſe ſentiments that opened every avenue to his heart, to give her more than angelic praiſe. That Jeſſy Montgomery ſhould become intimate with Mrs. Munſter, regulate her ſentiments by her's, imitate her conduct, and be the counterpart of Mrs. Munſter, conſtituted the firſt wiſh of his heart—if then his mother reſembled this paragon of goodneſs, he thought he ſhould be the happieſt of human beings. Colonel Fitz-James ſaid, he could not form a more accurate idea of

his mother, than exhibited itſelf perſonally and mentally in Mrs. Munſter, ſince ſhe had often been taken for the perſon in queſtion.

If you are anxious for the re-eſtabliſhment of my health," interrupted Munſter, "tell me, I beſeech you, where I can find my mother, this next paragon of excellence ?—O! my benefactor, I feel the ſacred glow of filial affection. My paſt errors ſtare me in the face, like tormenting demons: contrition and amendment ſhall mark my future conduct; I will be henceforth a comfort to ſuch a mother. Dear, dear, tender name of mother! how often have I longed to uſe the appellation !—Where, where is ſhe my friend ?"

"Have patience, young man; but ſuppoſe it were Mrs. Munſter herſelf ?"

Munſter was yet ignorant of the ſevere trials of adverſity his mother had experienced

enced in early days, or that ſhe ever reſided in Bengal, or that his real name was not Hamilton; conſequently he replied, not ſuſpecting the truth—

"I aſk no better gift of Heaven!"

"And what is that gift?" queſtioned Mrs. Munſter herſelf, who then entered the room.

"A preſumptuous one, madam," replied young Munſter, riſing from his chair, and extending his hand to welcome her entrance; "yet one I'll venture to affirm that would be envied by all who knew you half ſo well as does the ſuppliant."

"Then where lies the preſumption?" cried Mrs. Munſter, much delighted to obſerve her ſon in ſuch good ſpirits.

"Nothing leſs, madam, than that this vain young man," rejoined Colonel Fitz-James, "is aſking of Heaven one of the beſt of mothers!"

"Any parent would be happy in ſuch

a ſon; but Heaven does not always grant our petitions, however deſerving we may be," replied Mrs. Munſter, fondly gazing on her ſon.

"In the preſent inſtance," cried Colonel Fitz-James, moving towards the door, "the prayers of this arrogant young man are heard—ſince I leave him in his MOTHER'S ARMS!"

Mrs. Munſter hung in ſilent rapture upon her aſtoniſhed ſon, who ſhrunk from her embrace to emplore on his knees her bleſſing,—"Are *you!* indeed, my mother? —deareſt, deareſt mother! This poſture is only ſuited to approach ſuch excellence —why have I been a ſtranger to this bleſſedneſs?"

Mrs. Munſter raiſed him; "Beloved ſon! this moment repays all my miſery; this moment opens years of happineſs to my declining days—yes, deareſt *William*, bleſſings innumerable be thine."—She then proceeded to make the remainder of his ſituation known to him.

Among

Among the letters delivered by this day's poſt at the Hotel de Belle-vue, was one to Mr. Evington from Sir George Beaufort, requeſting his immediate return to London, with Mrs. Munſter, on buſineſs. Accordingly the utmoſt expedition being made to pack the neceſſary baggage, Mr. and Mrs. Evington, Maria, Mrs. Munſter, and Matilda Evans ſet out for Helvoetſluys; the French having now invaded Oſtend. Mrs. Munſter committed her ſon to the care of Colonel Fitz-James, and orders were left for Mr. Evans's coffin to follow immediately, attended by two of his own domeſtics.

They arrived at the beautiful little town the Brille, about a fortnight after Oſmond's departure from Bruſſels, where they took the uſual paſſport from the Engliſh agent, Mr. * * *, and ſlept the night at the Dutch inn, called the Doëlle; it being among Mr. Evington's peculiarities to prefer foreign hotels to any

others when abroad, by way of making himſelf and his family more acquainted with the cuſtoms of the country.

Mrs. Evington and Mrs. Munſter, accompanied by the Engliſh agent, walked about the town and ramparts. They were much pleaſed with both, from the excellent order the walks were in, and the warlike preparations that ornamented their borders. They returned down the *Slaagtvelt* *; from thence Mr. * * * introduced

* A promenade held in high repute by the inhabitants of the Brille, as well for its beauty, as from its being raiſed in commemoration of a deſperate battle fought many years ago on that ſpot between them and the Spaniards, and in conſequence of which it took its name *Slaagtvelt*, i. e. *field of ſlaughter*. On each ſide of this walk are double rows of majeſtic elms, extending a quarter of a mile along the edge of a canal, which runs through the middle of this town, numberleſs veſſels, of various ſizes, ornamenting its ſurface. Each end of the *Slaagtvelt* is terminated by a beautiful picturesque drawbridge, which arreſts the eye, but not the proſpect, being varied at one end by the ramparts, and

introduced the ladies to his wife and family, while he, with Mr. Evington, called on the poſt-maſter, who, ever exemplary polite to ſtrangers, received him with every mark of urbanity, but was unable to comply with his requeſt by ſtopping letters to Mr. Evington's direction at Bruſſels, not having permiſſion to open the Flanders mail, either to or from England.

While Mr. Evington amuſed himſelf with the poſt-maſter's pictures, ſome of which, in juſtice, he obſerved to be remarkably well executed, Mrs. Munſter received intelligence of a moſt painful nature at Mrs. * * *'s. The Engliſh and French

and a continuation of the canal, into another piece of water of greater extent, bordered by a row of houſes, but of ſuperior dimenſions, on each ſide the *Slaagvelt*; the canal then empties itſelf into an arm of the river *Maze*. On one of theſe bridges a view is had of the *hooft*, or key, which is alſo a pleaſant walk, and commands an extenſive proſpect on the other ſide of the water.

papers lay on the table, and, as elſewhere, the news they contained ſoon became a topic of converſation. "Here is," ſaid a young lady, who held the French Gazette, "a very pretty anecdote reſpecting one of our Engliſh officers: I believe it to be the ſame who dined with us a ſhort time ago." At Mrs. Munſter's and her mother's requeſt, ſhe read the paragraph aloud:

"A circumſtance of an intereſting nature, demonſtrative of heroical courage, took place previous to the late deſperate engagement. — A party of ſoldiers, headed by *Lieutenant Evington*, ſallied forth to *reconnoitre* the enemy's entrenchments. They were attacked by an out-poſt, conſiſting of double their number. The men, animated by their gallant officer's example, ſoon reduced the Frenchmen's ſuperiority; and man to man, they contended the victory. Lieutenant Evington about this time was cloſely engaged with an elderly French officer, when one of his own privates caught his arm, exclaiming, "*Spare, O! ſpare my father!*" The lieutenant nobly gave the officer his life, and after ſecuring his other priſoners, received the officer's thanks, whom he afterwards learnt to be an Iriſhman

in

in the French ſervice.—It is to be obſerved, that the young Engliſhman generouſly gave him his liberty. We are ſorry to add, that among the killed and miſſing in this action, is Lieutenant Evington, the officer we allude to."

How truly did the young lady repent particulariſing the anecdote, when Mrs. Munſter rejoined, with evident diſtreſs, "Oh! my unfortunate friend! is this indeed your fate?—Hapleſs Oſmond!—I entreat you, ladies, to conceal this paper. That young officer's father is the gentleman now with Mr. * * *, and to whom this paragraph may probably eſcape notice, if the Gazettes do not attract his attention, which, as you may imagine, would give him infinite ſorrow."

The requeſt was inſtantly complied with, and from real ſympathy every mode applied to diſſipate the grief the circumſtance had occaſioned.—Mr. Evington then came in with the agent, to take

leave of Mrs. ***, and joined the remainder of his family at the Doelle, to proceed for Helvoetſluys. Mrs. Munſter, with unremitted attention, prevailed on the landlord to keep the Hague Gazettes from Mr. and Mrs. Evington, and not to permit them to be about the inn, until her friends were embarked, on board the Dolphin packet, which now ſwelled its ſpreading ſails for England.—Mrs. Munſter's frequent ſighs, and general deſpondency, were imputed by the party to the ſituation in which ſhe had left her ſon, and tendered her their conſolations under this ſuppoſition; the real cauſe being diſtant from their imaginations.

Mr. Evington and his party arrived at Sir George Beaufort's, in Groſvenor-ſtreet, unaffected by any inquietude, excluſive of that which a fond father ever entertains, while an only ſon is expoſed to the dangers of a bloody campaign.

Lady

Lady Beaufort flew to meet her affectionate parents, and the dear aſſociates of her youth. In their alternate embrace, and in eloquent ſilence, ſhe breathed out that ardent pleaſure ſhe could not otherwiſe expreſs, and which diſſeminated itſelf with equal fervour in their ſeveral boſoms.— " Joyful return !" at length exclaimed Lady Beaufort, " long have I anticipated this happineſs in hourly impatience.—Now, what will you have ? What will you do with yourſelves ?— Come, Beaufort, ring the bell, for wine, cakes, and refreſhments. Dear Maria, my ſweet ſiſter, you ſeem fatigued to death ; Matilda likewiſe, pray take ſomething immediately. Do look at my mother, ſhe is crying with joy, I will kiſs away every tear. O ! may they never fall but on occaſions like this ! How far have you come to day ? When did you leave Holland ? How long was the paſſage ? What veſſel did you come in ? What captain ?"—Thus did the affectionate daugh-

ter aſk more queſtions in a breath, than could be anſwered in an hour. — Her grateful attentions to each perſon, and her ſolicitous enquiries after their health, rendered her voluble in the extreme: nor was the tender mother, the good father, the endearing ſiſter, the lovely friend, nor the amiable benefactreſs, leſs minute in their anſwers and interrogations.

" But where is my dear little grandſon?" enquired Mrs. Evington:" " I long to fold him in my arms."—" He is aſleep!" returned Lady Beaufort.—" Then you muſt abſolutely awake him, Emma." —" God bleſs my heart! not ſeen my boy?" cried Sir George—" fetch him, ſweet nurſe—Yes, nurſe; this little woman is really her own nurſe — and the beſt nurſe too, that ever lived."—The little boy was accordingly brought, and handed from one to another in rapturous delight.

Sir

Sir George Beaufort on the day of their arrival obſtinately refuſed, notwithſtanding Mr. Evington's preſſing invitation, to enter on any topic of buſineſs. "We have at laſt," ſaid Sir George, "by chance developed a dark myſtery, and it is pregnant with good fortune. This is all I will tell you to-day, my dear friends; ſo ceaſe to urge the point: the intervening hours ſhall be dedicated to conviviality. Come, Maria, come Matilda, follow my Emma's example: you ſee although ſhe has made me a grave *papa*, ſhe has not yet aſſumed the matron's gravity herſelf: now only do obſerve her friſking about with Charles Sinclair, and her little boy in her arms. O! the rogue! hear how he's laughing with his mother!" continued Sir George, then kiſſing his infant ſon in the mother's arms, he ſecretly ſaluted her hand at the ſame time.

After dinner two additional gueſts enlivened

livened the happy fire-ſide, in the perſons of Mrs. and Miſs Montgomery—"I have," ſaid Lady Beaufort, meeting them on their entrance, "denied myſelf to all but thoſe I moſt eſteem on earth, among whom theſe ladies, only require to be known to recommend themſelves to your particular friendſhip. As to this monopolizer of hearts,"—taking Jeſſy's hand—"I don't know what name to give her, that ſhe is an *unconſcionable* little thief, as all my acquaintance will bear witneſs; and Sir George is ſo partial to her that I am ſometimes inclined to accuſe her of hoſtile intentions againſt myſelf."

By letter theſe ladies were already well known to each other, conſequently a very ſhort time ſufficed to familiarize minds ſo congenial. By letter alſo, Lady Beaufort was apprized of every tranſaction that happened on the continent, and had previous to Mrs. Munſter's return

turn to England, undeceived Mrs. Montgomery and her daughter, reſpecting Hamilton's ſuppoſed indigency of birth. To Jeſſy this information afforded the ſublimeſt gratification; and though uninformed of Mr. Evans' generoſity, ſhe reſolved never to marry any other, ſince the principal objections, that of his low birth, was indubitably removed. The information gave Mrs. Montgomery pleaſure, inaſmuch as it became inſtrumental to the happineſs of the friends; but having other views at that time for her daughter, by a marriage with an elderly peer, who profeſſed himſelf much enamoured with Jeſſy Montgomery, ſhe ſilently lamented that the explanation had taken place, before ſhe had finally prevailed on her daughter to accept the *noble* lord, even againſt Jeſſy's heretofore repeated objections, becauſe it ſufficed not Mrs. Montgomery's high minded expectations to marry her daughter

to

to a ſtill fortuneleſs lieutenant in the navy.

By Mr. Evans' *will*, there remained no doubt of young Munſter's attachment to Miſs Montgomery. Mrs. Munſter, as may be expected, perhaps ſomewhat ſcrutinouſly ſurveyed and watched her intended daughter-in-law's behaviour; which in every reſpect contributed to heighten the opinion Lady Beaufort's letters had given her of this accompliſhed young woman. Cheerfulneſs and gaiety took their ſeats among the circle, and with their wonted efficacy made the hour for reſt approach imperceptibly, and the farewel "good-night," repeated with regret.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIII.

" I ſee the hand of Heaven in our misfortunes;
But juſtice ſtrikes, and ſuff'rers muſt ſubmit:
Woes are good counſellors, and kindly ſhow
What prosp'rous error never lets us know."

ARON HILL.

"FAMILY ſecrets" were now about to be diſcloſed. Mr. Evington, who could form no conception of the buſineſs his ſon-in-law alluded to, anticipated the eventful conference with impatience; nothing ſhort of that indeed which Mrs. Munſter ſuffered. When the family aſſembled the next morning, it was mutually agreed that the buſineſs ſhould be communicated as ſoon as the tea-equipage was removed. Sir George, who ever delighted to tantalize on ſubjects of pleaſure, reſolutely maintained till then a pro-

a provoking ſilence. The appointed time, however, came, and the ſervants received orders not to admit any company.—A loud knock at the door at this moment, announced they were only juſt iſſued in time. Sir George then entered with a bundle of papers, and began to ſpread them on the table, as the parlour door opened, and preſented Sir Stanhope and Lady Murdoc.

" Aye, I told you ſo, Sir Stanhope!" cried the loquacious Lady Murdoc :— " didn't I ſay they were at home, in ſpite of theſe ſtory-telling footmen?— Well! and my dear friends, how are you all? I'm vaſtly happy to ſee you. —La, you look monſtrous well in black, Miſs Evans—its very becoming: I ſhould not care if I was in mourning too, were I to look as handſome as you do, my dear."

" I beg pardon," rejoined Sir Stanhope, "for this ſeeming intruſion, but her ladyſhip

ladyſhip and myſelf were ſo anxious to enquire after your health, that I truſt a mark of friendſhip will atone for apparent rudeneſs."

Mr. Evington bowed formally, with evident diſpleaſure.—Sir George offered chairs.—Mrs. Munſter replied to Lady Murdoc's miſplaced compliment, by obſerving that ſhe ſuppoſed her ladyſhip to be unacquainted with the cauſe of their ſable appearance, or ſhe could not have expreſſed herſelf ſo unfeelingly.

" O! dear, no! I eaſily gueſſed why it was ſo barbarouſly deep; but you *know ma'am*, old people can't live for ever, and, I'm ſure, there's no loſs, when they do us the favour to pop off—*he! he! he!*

' Thus gout, or fever, ſword or ſhot,
Or ſomething ſends us all to pot,'

Dibdin's ſong of ' *Soldier Dick,*' ſays ſo, you know, *mem!* — its a vaſtly pretty tune.—I ſuppoſe you ſing it, my lady, for

for you're ſo deſperately fond of muſic?"—

It is impoſſible to deſcribe the indignation theſe ſentiments created in minds uncontaminated by vice. Such language in the preſence of her own huſband, whoſe advanced years made it appear as alluſive to him, raiſed their utmoſt averſion—" Your ladyſhip's ſentiments," cried Mrs. Evington, with a degree of contempt, " diſſimilate egregiouſly from ours, and are ſuch as I hope *my* daughter will never entertain."

" Well, but my dear friend," interrupted Sir Stanhope, addreſſing himſelf to Mr. Evington, and perceiving his lady deſervedly confuſed, " are you not ſurprized to ſee me already returned to dearold England, the land of the living? Egad one had better be buried alive, than live any where elſe in the whole univerſe!"

" Why,

" Why, Sir Stanhope, there are times and circumſtances when a man is heartily rejoiced to bid England farewel."—" Aye and for ever too," rejoined Sir George Beaufort, emphatically.

" O! certainly, certainly! there are miſerable devils glad enough to refuge any where in the world—certainly, certainly!" replied Sir Stanhope.

" Yes, ſir, more than is generally known I believe, were their private tranſactions properly inveſtigated: ſuch exhibitions of the heart would be unfavourable to many, I apprehend," ſaid Sir George.

" There is undoubtedly much truth in your remark, Sir George," cried Mr. Evington: " yet, in my opinion, the man who is capable of acting ignominiouſly in private, becomes more an object of hatred than the common highwayman.—Mankind is, indeed, deceitful, and the longer we live the more we are convinced of it: however, thank God! I may venture to affirm, that I care not

were

were the world acquainted with every action of my life, although I have queſtionleſs committed many follies."

" No man is expected to be faultleſs —certainly, certainly not," obſerved Sir Stanhope; " beſides, there are always different conſtructions put upon things; and what to one perſon appears a crime, is conſidered by another as a *coup de main*, a lucky hit—a trifle of no conſequence as a character."

" La," rejoined Lady Murdoc, " what a monſtrous grave converſation—fie! Sir Stanhope, don't preach in company: you know

' We've enough of that at ſea;'

or rather at home—

' With a fal, lal, lal, lal, la, la, la.'

Do you play that ſweet thing, the ' New Mariners?'—what a delightful piece of muſic! ain't it, my lady? But inſufferable when compared to the Italian airs, ain't it, my lady?"

" Will you hold your chattering, Lady Murdoc?

Murdoc? Egad, that woman's tongue is never ſtill a moment together!"

"There! there! there! now, you're flying into a paſſion, without rhyme or reaſon—

'I ne'er muſt ſpeak, good gracious—
I'm ſure it's quite vexatious.'

I always ſing the old fool out of his bad humours," whiſpered her ladyſhip to Maria.

"But what," demanded Sir George ſternly, "you denominate trifles, Sir Stanhope, I may not: for example, is it a trifle to become the voluntary murderer of a fellow-creature?"

"O! horrid! horrid! an infernal crime," anſwered Sir Stanhope.

"Yet, ſuch things are done, and regarded afterwards as *trifles*.—Is it then a *coup de main* to caſt the helpleſs, the widow, or the orphan in the ſtreet?"

"Inhuman! certainly! certainly inhuman"—returned Sir Stanhope, thoughtfully, leaning upon the head of his cane.

"What

" What is called a *lucky hit*, I ſuppoſe, is to acquire large eſtates by ſome means or other, making it appear to the world a juſt claim, while the rightful owners are perhaps deſtitute of the very neceſſaries of life."

" La, bleſs me, Sir George!" exclaimed Lady Murdoc " what a picture of wickedneſs you have drawn: I'm ſure no man could be capable of ſuch enormous crimes—I dare ſay he would be detected, ſir."

" Some time hence your ladyſhip may have reaſon to ſhudder at the baſeneſs of human nature; for the light of truth muſt ſooner or later penetrate into the deepeſt receſſes of the heart, madam."

" Well, for my part, I never think of the future, nor care for the paſt; it's quite enough to look to the preſent—

' Though ſo melancholy days have paſt by,
It would be folly now to think on't more.'

—however, Sir George, I hope it may never

never throw its light on ſuch a picture of guiltineſs," replied Lady Murdoc.

" Come, Lady Stanhope, we have already conſiderably deranged Sir George and this company, let us bid them good-morning; for we have ſeveral viſits to make."

" La, you ſaid, Sir Stanhope, that you would not call any where to-day: I have not talked over one half I wiſh; don't be in ſuch a hurry."

Sir Stanhope frowned, and requeſted Lady Beaufort to ring the bell, wiſhing them ſeverally good-morning, and in an angry tone deſired his lady to attend him immediately, adding, that he thought ſhe had expoſed herſelf enough for one day, with her ridiculous ſpeeches, and old ballads.—Lady Stanhope reluctantly obeyed, after having invited Lady Beaufort and the party to dinner the following day, which ſhe coolly declined, by

ſaying they were deeply engaged for a length of time.

Sir George Beaufort ſcarcely returned the bow, which however paſſed unnoticed by Sir Stanhope, who appeared too much hurried to obſerve any thing but the way to the door, which he took with as much haſte as he conveniently could make without falling.

" This intruſion," ſaid Mr. Evington, rejoiced at their departure, " was truly unwelcome, and Sir Stanhope had good reaſon to feel it methinks."

" I meant he ſhould," cried Sir George Beaufort, " by way of preparing him for what is coming. — Conſummate hypocrite! how fortunate that he is come to England! as it will ſpare me the trouble—"

" Explain yourſelf, Sir George; were then your words really directed to himſelf?

ſelf? Are our ſuſpicions concerning your father's eſtates realized?"

"They are: every ſyllable I uttered pointed to his heart—Did you not ſee how he changed colour repeatedly?—Did you not obſerve his embarraſſment?—his inability to anſwer my laſt accuſation—and his haſte to depart?—O! Mr. Evington! ſuch a train of wickedneſs has developed itſelf in that man, ſince and previous to my writing to you at Bruſſels, as will make each ſeparate hair ſtand upright, and freeze the very blood in your veins. — Theſe papers, which I was going to ſhew you, have forced their way through years of infamy; till at laſt, by the ſecret hand of Providence, they have reached their deſtination, and bear evidence of the moſt complicated villainy. — This man, my dear ſir, by his artifice, prevented my father ſeeing Louiſa on her marriage with Munſter; through his inſtigation was ſhe perſuaded to accompany her huſband to

India : HE, it was, who intercepted all my letters ; by the vileſt policy HE haſtened my father's diſſolution, though on finding that he could not prevail on him to diſinherit my ſiſter, he forged—yes forged—my father's teſtament, or his attorney did it for him :— and by ſuch fraudulent means, under the ſuppoſition of my death, he took poſſeſſion of our fortune."

" Good heavens, how you aſtoniſh me !" exclaimed Mrs. Munſter—" Then my father, perhaps, forgave me! but proceed: how have you unravelled this myſtery, which has ſo long withſtood even the ſearching eye of the law?"

" By mere accident.—About a month ago, I was walking in the park, towards the duſk of the evening ; a man and woman were in converſation juſt before me: ' Well, my dear,' ſaid the woman, ' you know I muſt have that ſpare room emptied for your brother and his wife, ſince you have promiſed them a bed.'—

bed.'—'All the papers, excepting poor Ryder's, may be thrown into a cheſt, and put in the garret,' anſwered the man.—'And why not Ryder's among the reſt?' queſtioned the woman: 'they will only litter the houſe, and I'm ſure are of no uſe; for your brother told me he ſhould never have time to look them over: beſides, if he had, there's no good in them, I'll anſwer for it.'—Such were their own words: now you may remember that Ryder, Sir Stanhope's late lawyer, died before I came to England, ſince which, we could never trace who ſucceeded him, or where he depoſited his papers.—I followed the people to their houſe; their name I learnt to be Lighton, and from thence became apprized that the Mr. Ryder they alluded to, was the ſame perſon.—They refuſed at firſt to let me inſpect the papers in their care; but on re-urging the point, I gained permiſſion to look them over: on examination I found they were likely to

be of material conſequence. Mr. Lighton, the undertaker, told me that his brother was a lawyer, and practiſed in the north of England, where Mr. Ryder died, and left him ſole executor.—The week after this diſcovery I called again upon Mr. Lighton, and his brother, who arrived that ſame day with my attorney; we both conjectured, that we ſhould find there had been uncommon treachery made uſe of. The elder Lighton objected to have the papers further inveſtigated, and would have probably deſtroyed them had we been an hour later. After paſſing a tedious time in uſeleſs expoſtulations, I determined to have him immediately ſecured, and by compulſion come at the myſtery, if he perſiſted to refuſe me permiſſion. At length the man being terrified on finding me reſolute, threw himſelf on his kees, and implored for mercy, adding, that he would inform me of every thing, and give me all the papers, provided I would promiſe

miſe to forgive him.—Hereupon I learnt that he had long been an intimate friend of Mr. Ryder's, who had imparted the whole tranſaction to him: that among theſe papers I ſhould find Sir William Beaufort's real will, with many letters towards the elucidation of the unwarrantable deed.—That he had received a conſiderable ſum of money from Sir Stanhope Murdoc, and that on Mr. Ryder's death-bed he made him a handſome legacy, on condition never to divulge the ſecret, but deſtroy all his papers with his own hands; for which purpoſe he came expreſsly to London, having never been able to quit the north ſince Mr. Ryder's death.

" His words were indeed ſtrictly true: I thanked him, and, with my attorney, inſpected the papers.—Shocking frauds, excluſive of the preſent one, they diſcloſed.—Our honoured father, I find, not only forgave Louiſa, but ſettled her for-

tune on her children, with my patrimony, in caſe my death ſhould be irrefragably aſcertained."

" O! my God! how infinite thou art in goodneſs!—my deareſt William is then provided for!" exclaimed Mrs. Munſter, claſping her hands, half falling to the ground, offering the firſt effuſions of deep-felt gratitude to the great Author of all good.

Mr. and Mrs. Evington expreſſed their pleaſure, and the ſurprize ſuch a diſcovery could not fail to excite, with the moſt lively marks of undiſguiſed ſatisfaction. Maria and Matilda's ſentiments were now fraught with ſuch perfect deteſtation of Sir Stanhope, that they remained ſilent, becauſe they found words were inexpreſſive of the horror they conceived towards a perſon of ſuch iniquity.

Sir George then opened and read his deceaſed

deceaſed father's will, which put him in poſſeſſion of his own eſtates, and gave his ſiſter's children very handſome fortunes. He alſo read ſeveral letters, written and ſigned by Sir Stanhope, addreſſed to his attorney, Mr. Ryder, one as follows:

"'THE buſineſs, my good fellow, is nearly completed, *en chef d'œuvre.* Old ſquare-toes takes it to heart juſt as he ſhould do; by way of haſtening his paſſage to the next world, I take pretty good care to revive the ſubject inceſſantly in this, as I perceive it has an admirable effect upon his cracked nerves. Upon recollection, I won't charge my conſcience with murder; ſo that if young *Mars*, you know who I mean, will live, why let him—provided the *old one* is kept in the dark. — Therefore, my worthy friend, the moment you receive this, diſpatch a meſſenger to counter-

order the little gentle draught; becauſe a good chriſtian can't live happy, and be wilfully the death of any man, by ſuch ſort of things. The reſt are only trifles. What the devil do you do out of town? Suppoſe Sir William ſhould *kick the bucket* to night, who will be there to give me *up* what he leaves behind, if you're not? So mind you, and the will (you comprehend *the will?*) comes on the receipt of this, to

"'" Your's, faithfully,

"'S. MURDOC.'"

"There's a production for you! Perhaps an original, of its ſort," ſaid Sir George.—"He talks of conſcience too; what muſt a man's conſcience be to write ſuch an epiſtle, and think of living happy?"—"Be!—black as the infernal regions, and void of every ſenſe of feeling," replied Mr. Evington. "What ſays your

your attorney to all this?—he muſt conſider himſelf deviliſhly obliged to his profeſſional brother."

"With juſtice," rejoined Sir George, "I may venture to believe his private character not only ſtrictly honeſt, but amiable, and benevolent, as is his public one; on both of which I have irrefragable proofs, ſuch as bear the beſt evidence, being matter of facts. He is always ready to acknowledge the abuſes practiſed by too many of his brotherhood: however, we will hope, for the benefit of ſociety, that few *Ryders* remain."

"Too many, I fear; but *is* there no apprehenſion of his will being thought illegal? Can you not take immediate poſſeſſion of Sir Stanhope's property?" demanded Mr. Evington.

"The firſt counſellor I ſuppoſe in the world, Mr. Erſkine, has given me his opinion, which carries it inconteſtably in our favour. For the preſent we ſhall be inconſiderable gainers, as I under-

ſtand Sir Stanhope has mortgaged all his eſtates (or rather what he called his), to a vaſt amount, beſides having contracted numberleſs debts upon them. Thus our family will be benefited, but their parents muſt content themſelves to remain as they are."

Sir George Beaufort then retired to conſult what ſteps were to be taken, until Mr. Evans' funeral was over, as the coffin waited their attendance to Devonſhire. It was, in conſequence, agreed, that Mr. Evington and Sir George Beaufort ſhould accompany Mr. Evans' remains to his mauſoleum in Evans' Park—it being unneceſſary for the ladies to undertake ſo melancholy a journey; after which proper means ſhould be enforced reſpecting Sir Stanhope; and they ſet out next morning.

Their reception at Evans' Hall was attended with ſublime, yet melancholy pleaſure,

pleaſure, by the mourning domeſtics, who on meeting Mr. Evington, individually expreſſed the ſincere regret they experienced on the loſs of ſo good a maſter as was Mr. Evans ; with unfeigned gratitude they all wept over his bier.—The funeral obſequies being performed by the Rev. Doctor Orton, with the awful ſolemnity of heartfelt ſorrow, awakening every feeling of regret in the boſoms of his numerous auditors : domeſtics, villagers, children of his bounty, male and female, manifeſted thoſe demonſtrations of affliction, that pourtrayed, in every ſenſe of the word, Mr. Evans to have been a *good man,* and as ſuch univerſally lamented.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIV.

——— " My Heart ſinks in me,
And ev'ry ſlacken'd fibre drops its hold,
Like nature letting down the ſprings of life."
COWLEY.

MEANWHILE Sir Stanhope Murdoc and his Lady returned to their elegant manſion in St. James's-ſquare, equally out of temper, ariſing however from very different cauſes; her ladyſhip's from not having an opportunity of diſplaying her grandeur, or of deſcribing the adulation ſhe had received abroad, and diſappointed of giving a grand route at her houſe that week, which the noble baronet had angrily forbade taking place.

Sir Stanhope's ill humour was ſomewhat more acute, as it aroſe from ſtronger incitements. Sir George Beaufort's converſation

verſation ſeemed pregnant with diſtruſt; it even touched upon ſubjects which goaded his conſcience, and ſtarted a thouſand fears of detection; callous as his heart was to repentance. From the inſtant ſuch apprehenſions were awakened, the moments that detained him from his lawyer, who carried on the ſuit againſt Sir George Beaufort, were ſpent in excruciating ſuſpenſe; repeatedly he ordered the coachman to quicken his pace on pain of being diſcharged; though he galloped his horſes, even from his firſt entrance into the carriage. After having ſet Lady Stanhope down in St. James's-ſquare, he drove to Lincoln's-inn, in queſt of Mr. Waal, his attorney. Here he raved about the room, and threw down the chairs, half diſtracted by impatience and fear until Mr. Waal's return: when he did come, Sir Stanhope queſtioned him concerning the buſineſs, with that dreadful miſtruſt which, as if it were its own puniſhment, tortures perpetually the guilty

guilty conſcience. He found the buſineſs remained preciſely where it did before he quitted England; and that no papers had been produced to abrogate or to annul his lawful claim.—Mr. Waal aſſured him that he had made every enquiry of Mr. Lighton in the north, who ſwore ſolemnly to having deſtroyed all the late Mr. Ryder's papers; ſo that if Sir William Beaufort ever made another teſtament, or gave into Mr. Ryder's hands any ſupernumerary paper, they were condemned with the reſt.

Sir Stanhope now breathed again with eaſe; this account ſatisfied his wiſhes, and he exulted as much that Sir George Beaufort would have all the coſts to defray, as he trembled before on ſuppoſition of being detected. Revived by this aſſurance, he bade Mr. Waal good-day, adding, "that he was the beſt fellow in the world."

Sir

Sir George Beaufort and Mr. Evington having fulfilled their laſt duties to Mr. Evans' memory in Devonſhire returned to London; and though highly exaſperated againſt Sir Stanhope, Sir George determined not to expoſe his relation to the puniſhment his crimes juſtly waited.—He nevertheleſs intended to excite his apprehenſions of the worſt befalling him; before he gave him an opportunity of eſcaping the rigour of the law. Accordingly ſome time after, attended by Mr. Evington and his attorney, with the neceſſary papers, he waited on Sir Stanhope Murdoc, who received him with every demonſtration of oſtentatious welcome, ſince his own terrors on the ſubject, ever uppermoſt in his thoughts, had been appeaſed through Mr. Waal's communication; and while he ſuppoſed Sir George harped upon ſuſpicions only, he reſolved boldly to laugh ſuch ſuggeſtions to ſcorn—no very difficult taſk, when ſhameleſs effrontery and vitiated principles

ciples uſurped the place of truth and honeſty.

" We are come upon buſineſs, Sir," ſaid Sir George.

" You are welcome at all times, my dear friends; indeed it grieves me to think what large ſums of money have been diſburſed in this uſeleſs contention in the law; its concluſion will, I hope, cement our friendſhip; ſince you muſt be perfectly ſatisfied at preſent of the rectitude of MY conduct:—your miſplaced ſuſpicions have often wounded my feelings, but in conſideration of the reciprocal amity that exiſted between your father and myſelf, you muſt allow I have ſubmitted to them patiently; and to prove the ſincerity of that eſteem, I do inſiſt on your accepting a ſmall ſum towards the payment of this unfortunate—"

" Hold, Sir Stanhope! I can hear no more—talk not of my father—but tremble to behold his injured ſon—yes, tremble! thou infamous old man! and know,

to

to thy eternal ſhame, that my ſuſpicions were guileleſs in compariſon to the extent of your detected treachery."

"Sir George! I—I—do not underſtand your meaning, Sir—there is ſome fraud here, certainly—you are deceived, ſir—moderate your anger—till we inveſtigate the cauſe of theſe accuſations—MY treachery, ſir! what language is this?"

"Worſe and worſe, by heavens! to defend the point!—Fraud! yes, thou villain, here is indeed nothing but fraud, and *yourſelf, ſir*, the perpetrator of it all: to appeal to your feelings, would be vain as to addreſs the petrified ſtone, but the *law* will *inveſtigate* the reſt—the *law* ſhall inflict your proper puniſhment.—Do you know this ſignature?—Do you know this letter?—Well may you turn pale! Here, here! is the completion of your wickedneſs! Dare you look on this teſtament and not ſhudder?--or do you, perjured hypocrite! imagine the dead will not be avenged?—O! infamous old man!—the hour of retribution

tion at length is come.—Mr. Morland, ſeize him—confine him, till proper officers arrive."

Sir Stanhope now perceived it uſeleſs to play the ſycophant longer—ſuch inconteſtable proofs ſtared him in the face, as precluded at once any vindication: had Sir William Beaufort himſelf ariſen from his grave, and demanded back his own property, Sir Stanhope would have felt leſs aghaſt at his appearance than when the fatal papers were preſented to his ſight; all of which he firmly believed at that period were inſcrutable to the eye of man.

Horror, fear, and anger, alternately predominated over his diſtorted features —his tall thin frame ſhook at every word; while thoſe faculties, ſo long dormant to the ſenſe of ſhame, bounded from their trance as if to leave every avenue open to the ſting of ſelf-accuſation, and every feeling

ing became ſorely alive to the ſmart of keen merited reproach. While the trembling baronet, ſtill pale, and ſpeechleſs, ſtood aghaſt, Sir George Beaufort continued to ſtart freſh demonſtrations of perfidy; he awakened new ſenſations in Sir Stanhope's criminal boſom, and one fear ſuperſeded the other—but when Sir George authoritatively committed the accuſed offender to his attorney, Mr. Morland, deſpair took poſſeſſion of his ſoul, and deprived him of the little remaining ſtrength before left, and he fell on the ground.

Lady Murdoc, at this untimely juncture, entered the parlour—Sir George Beaufort experienced great diſtreſs to be the cauſe of ſuch a meeting; yet as he meant not to fulfil the menace which had ſtruck Sir Stanhope to the heart, he rejoiced to find that it had made ſome impreſſion on a mind ſo depraved.—Aware that her ladyſhip would impart whatever he threatened to her huſband when he recovered

covered—" Leave him, Mr. Morland," cried Sir George, " it were better ſuch a villain died by the ſting of his own reproving conſcience, then revive to meet his death by the hand of the executioner. —Mr. Morland, you will obey my orders. —You, my lady, are, comparatively ſpeaking, to be pitied; yet, you brought this affliction on yourſelf; and if the puniſhment that awaits you is ſevere, remember, Lady Murdoc, that mercenary views are deſtructive to happineſs, and thoſe alone influenced your ignoble choice —You quitted a fond parent's arms to gratify your thirſt for riches, which are now all vaniſhed—What recompenſe is left?--a bad huſband! poor, old, and, what is a thouſand times worſe, of infamous character"—ſaying which, Sir George Beaufort quitted the room, and her ladyſhip, mute with aſtoniſhment.

Mr. Evington then approached her, while proper means were taken to recover Sir Stanhope, after having briefly explained

ed what had tranſpired relative to this ſhocking circumſtance—" Such proceedings," continued Mr. Evington, "may well affect your ladyſhip—yet, in ſome meaſure, you are an innocent ſufferer: allow it then to give you pain inaſmuch only as it may be conducive to correct any latent vanity. It becomes a duty in your ladyſhip at preſent to uſe every means to ſecure the perſon of your unfortunate huſband; I would adviſe you to order a chaiſe immediately, that before Mr. Morland returns, who believes him in a deadly trance, he may be half way on his road to Dover, or to any ſea-port, from whence he may quit the kingdom. This I propoſe in conſideration of the eſteem I bear your good mother; and to give you more time, I will endeavour to meet Mr. Morland, and detain him in converſation—farewel, my lady—I require no thanks—would it had been in my power to prevent your being allied to ſuch a worthleſs character!"

Mr.

Mr. Evington then withdrew, repeating his injunctions to uſe diſpatch; but Lady Murdoc's grief almoſt deprived her complying with them, though ſhe felt convinced of the neceſſity, for the loſs of her huſband appeared inconſequent to the diſappointment and privation of that fortune which it carried with it; however ſhe collected power to order a chaiſe, by which time Sir Stanhope began to recollect himſelf, and demanded, in a fearful voice —"Where were the ge..gen...tlemen?"

"I ſuppoſe they will be here preſently," replied Lady Murdoc, who informed him of the expreſſion Sir George had made uſe of in quitting the houſe, and urgently preſſing him at the ſame time to avail himſelf of their abſence; for which purpoſe a chaiſe then waited.

"What good will that anſwer?" returned Sir Stanhope; "I ſhall be overtaken —no—let me remain and *die* if any conſolation is left, 'tis in the knowledge that I have enjoyed theſe curſed eſtates nearly

to

to my death, and that they are now of little value to my ſurvivors."

"O fie, Sir Stanhope! bad indeed muſt be your heart to derive conſolation from that ſource—What is to become of me, ſir?"

"Juſt what you pleaſe, madam, if you don't chooſe to follow me!"

"What is to ſupport me, if I do, ſir?"

"Juſt what will ſupport me, madam."

"What is that, pray?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing!—who do you ſuppoſe would live with you upon nothing?—What am I to do for my carriage, my horſes, and my ſervants?"

"Juſt as you did before I married you, madam—go without them.—Come, madam, come along."

"Indeed I ſhall not, ſir;—I thought you preferred ſtaying here."

"You thought like a fool then, to ſuppoſe a man would wilfully reſign himſelf to the hangman."

Sir Stanhope being no longer awed by perſonal and immediate fears, and finding the dread Sir George away, now roſe to depart; but as he approached towards the window, he beheld the vehicle that waited to convey him in a few hours from his home and country for ever: his hardened feelings ſoftened on the recollection, and a tranſient ſigh of regret eſcaped his boſom. In the next interval, Sir William Beaufort, with his own papers in hand, ſeemed before his imagination—he ſtarted with horror, and graſping his cane, moved tremblingly towards the door, ejaculating to Lady Murdoc, "Farewel, madam, for ever! you have amply puniſhed the folly I committed when I married you, by your ill temper, your unfeeling conduct, and deteſted arrogance: beware the laſt does not complete your ruin more effectually, if poſſible, than it has mine—Farewel, hapleſs woman!"

Lady Murdoc wept abundantly, but attempted

attempted not to reply. Sir Stanhope caſt another ſorrowful look round his ſplendid manſion, and entered the chaiſe, giving orders to the coachman to proceed to Harwich.

CHAPTER XV.

" Oh mortals ! ſhort of ſight, who think the paſt
" O'er-blown misfortunes ſtill ſhall prove the laſt;
" Alas ! misfortunes travel in a train,
" And oft in life form one perpetual chain:
" Fear buries fear, and ills on ills attend,
" Till life and ſorrow meet one common end."

YOUNG.

WHILE theſe tranſactions took place in St. James's-ſquare, one of a pleaſanter nature took place in Groſvenor-ſtreet, in the arrival of young Munſter and Colonel Fitz-James. The firſt had recovered his ſtrength, though not altogether his healthful countenance, which, however, in no manner diminiſhed his perſonal attractions. —Munſter was apprized of that part of Mr. Evans's *will* which concerned himſelf, and after having tenderly embraced his mother, he flew to receive the grateful welcome

welcome he knew awaited him, from his tenderly beloved Jeſſy.

If Mrs. Montgomery's ſalutation anſwered not Munſter's ardent wiſhes, her daughter's unreſtrained joy on beholding her lover once again beneath the ſame roof with herſelf, compenſated for her mother's coolneſs in a manner the moſt grateful to his feelings, and clearly evinced that her affection had ſuffered no diminution of tenderneſs by abſence; while Jeſſy, on her part, experienced equal gratification in being unexpectedly ſurpriſed by the entrance of the man ſhe preferred above the reſt of the world; and whoſe expreſſive eyes, the moment he met her's, confeſſed his love unchanged. The mutual exclamations of joy ſubſided: the trio ſeated themſelves round the table. Munſter then addreſſed Mrs. Montgomery with his uſual frankneſs—"I fear, my dear madam, abſence has wrought little in my favour.—Now ſo many objec-

tions, doubtleſs juſt in themſelves, are removed, reſpecting my family, unleſs you have any perſonal diſlike to me, I muſt again ſolicit your conſent for my union with your daughter. I have, comparatively ſpeaking, little to offer but a faithful heart; nevertheleſs, my dear madam, at Sir Stanhope's deceaſe, *part* of that eſtate he enjoys muſt devolve on our family; which with my *pay*, and what the worthy Mr. Evans has done me the honour to bequeath, will enable us to live comfortably—Shall we not, dear love?" queſtioned young Munſter to Miſs Montgomery.

Mrs. Montgomery ſaid ſhe muſt conſider about it; for young people always imagined that they could make ſhillings into pounds. She would nevertheleſs conſult with his mother, upon this buſineſs, after which if Miſs Montgomery's uncle approved the connection, ſhe would not withhold her ſanction.

At

At this period entered Mr. Evington, who related to young Munſter and Mrs. Montgomery the buſineſs with Sir Stanhope Murdoc; adding, that he wiſhed to ſpeak with Mrs. Montgomery in private, where he then informed her of Mr. Evans's laſt injunctions, ſhowing at the ſame time the letter directed to her daughter.

"I have," continued Mr. Evington, "forborne to urge the point until Mr. William Munſter came, truſting that his amiable qualities would be of more avail than any other inducements, eſpecially ſince Mr. Munſter is at preſent allied to one of the beſt families in England, and will eventually poſſeſs an ample fortune, excluſive of the honourable profeſſion he purſues. Come, madam, ſuffer me to be the bearer of happineſs, and carry your free approbation."

Mrs. Montgomery having no eſſential objections to ſtate, at length complied,

obſerving, " that if ſhe had withheld her conſent until this period, her daughter's *future* happineſs alone influenced her conduct; as in the preſent moment ſhe evinced it by freely acquieſcing to the propoſals."

They returned together, and ſhe good-humouredly joined the hands of the young affectionate couple, who then accompanied Mr. Evington and Mrs. Montgomery to Groſvenor-ſtreet, where Mr. Munſter, by permiſſion, preſented his affianced Jeſſy to his mother, and his benefactor Colonel Fitz-James, who unheſitatingly preſſed her to their boſoms, and congratulated Munſter on the happy choice of his affections.

As Munſter would, of neceſſity, be compelled ſhortly to join his ſhip, from which illneſs had detained him ſo long, he began already to preſs for the bridal day to be named; and as their attachment was of conſiderable

conſiderable duration, all parties eſpouſed his cauſe and prevailed on Mrs. Montgomery to fix the nuptials for that day week. —Miſs Montgomery objected to ſuch precipitancy, and wiſhed to poſtpone them until Oſmond could lead Matilda Evans to the altar. But, young Evington's return being allowed very uncertain, and probably diſtant, Matilda herſelf voted againſt it, and Jeſſy found reſiſtance ineffectual.

Some weeks, previous to theſe eclairciſſements, had elapſed without bringing letters from Oſmond, which circumſtance rendered Matilda and his family unhappy in the extreme, who were yet uninformed of the diſaſtrous anecdote that mentioned him to be among the killed. As Mrs. Munſter wiſhed to believe every ſucceeding poſt would contradict this paragraph, ſhe preferred keeping it a ſecret, until neceſſity demanded that it ſhould be divulged. In compliment to Mrs. Munſter and her amiable ſon, during the nuptial

 preparations,

preparations, they endeavoured, by every ſtratagem, to conceal their uneaſineſs, and partake of their friends' pleaſure; being now altogether, as it were, one family.

On the eve of the appointed day, as the mails brought no letters from Oſmond, Mr. Evington walked to the war-office, to inſpect the late official returns from the continent. Upon enquiry he found all his apprehenſions realized, and that *Lieutenant Evington* was in the return of the killed. What a pang did this melancholy confirmation carry with it to his heart. "O! my poor dear ſon!" exclaimed Mr. Evington aloud, almoſt diſtracted by grief. "what will thy fond mother feel! Oh, my child! my Oſmond! beſt of ſons!"—Tears nearly ſuffocated the wretched parent: in vain the gentlemen of the office offered what conſolation they could; grief, for a while, obſtructed every avenue to his heart, and enveloped his ſoul.

" Compaſſion ſwells our grief; words ſoft and kind
But ſoothe our weakneſs, and diſſolve the mind."

His eyes were rivetted to the fatal paragraph, while his aching heart bled over every ſeparate letter of Oſmond's name. In this ſtate of affliction he remained ſome time, when recollecting himſelf, he aroſe, begged pardon for the interruption his diſtreſs had occaſioned, and returned home.—Here every preparation of joy greeted his ſorrowful eye: fortunately he eſcaped the enquiries of the family on his entrance, which gave him an opportunity to collect himſelf: he then faſtened the door of his chamber, and gave free vent to the fulneſs of his heart; after which, being ſomewhat relieved, he determined to conceal this painful intelligence, that it might not caſt a damp on the nuptials of young Munſter and Jeſſy Montgomery. Accordingly he aſſumed tolerable cheerfulneſs when compelled to be in their preſence, and attend-

ed the wedding next morning with apparent compoſure.—Matilda and Maria accompanied as bride-maids, and Charles Sinclair as bride-man. But their ſpirits were aſſumed; the melancholy fears which preyed upon them, on Oſmond's account, forced itſelf in tears down their cheeks during the ceremony. Matilda ſeemed to feel a *preſentiment* of what had happened, and when they quitted the church, with the utmoſt difficulty ſhe was ſupported to her carriage.

Jeſſy wanted nothing to exhilarate her ſpirits, and with ineffable ſweetneſs diſperſed their cares for a while in pleaſantry and good-humour, till the collation finiſhed, and the chaiſe waited to conduct the blooming bride and bridegroom to Sir George Beaufort's country houſe in Devonſhire, where Lady Beaufort had ordered every preparation to be made to receive her new-married friends.

Towards

Towards evening, as the remaining party were at dinner, a ſervant delivered a ſmall packet to Mr. Evington, ſaying it came from Holland, and that the man had orders to deliver it in his own hands. Every eye at the ſame inſtant was tranſfixed on the parcel; Mr. Evington broke the ſeals, ſecretly hoping that it might yet contradict the returns in the gazettes: a letter and a ſmall box were its contents; the letter was merely from an officer in Oſmond's regiment, ſtating that he forwarded Mr. Evington's watch and ſeals, with a picture that hung ſuſpended to his neck when he fell, and which a ſoldier had brought him; that it grieved him to add, from the enemy's preſſing ſo faſt upon them, they had been unable to give him the rights of burial!—Mr. Evington's ghaſtly countenance, demonſtrative of horror, anguiſh, and affection, betrayed the fatal purport of the letter—Matilda turned pale—anticipating terror chilled life's blood—"You need not inform me, ſir—I read it in your face—Oſmond is

NO MORE!"—"Relieve our ſuſpenſe, for God's ſake," cried Mrs. Evington, ready to ſink with apprehenſion.—"O, my brother! is he indeed fallen? My Oſmond! my dear, dear brother!" ejaculated the almoſt lifeleſs Maria.—Lady Beaufort echoed the exclamation, offering to ſupport her hapleſs mother.

"What ſhall I ſay?—this letter brings us little comfort—little hope—but ſummon up all your fortitude, my beloved wife, that theſe dear girls may follow our good example."

Matilda by this time had flown round to Mr. Evington, and ſeized the little box. "This," ſhe cried, "I know contains that which belonged to my Oſmond. I MUST, indeed, ſir, I WILL open it." She then, on her knees, lifted up the cover, and diſcovered her own picture hanging to a black ribbon, with part of his hair ſtill attached to the knot of

the

the ribbon, and evidently torn from the neck by force.

" O! my God!—O! Oſmond! my dear Oſmond!" exclaimed the proſtrate Matilda, " this precious bit of ribbon has brought me his laſt ſad token of conſtancy See how his hair is interwoven in the knot!" Her cheek was colourleſs, but not one pitying tear came to her relief: here, ſtill on her knees, ſhe reclined her head on the table. Mrs. Munſter, who hourly watched an opportunity to reveal the diſaſtrous event, had ſent in vain to the war-office, where the official accounts only arrived a few minutes previous to Mr. Evington's enquiries: ſhe now uſed all her influence to tranquillize the inconſolable ſufferer.—Matilda preſſed the unfortunate locket to her boſom, while her tearleſs eye rolled with diſtracting anguiſh. In this poſture, ſhe figured to herſelf Oſmond left bleeding on the ground, trampled

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pled upon by horſes, and hordes of men; ſhe fancied ſhe beheld his mangled body before her, his eyes cloſed, and himſelf lifeleſs. Theſe dreadful ideas preſented themſelves in vivid colours, and ſoon diſordered her mind, which had borne up againſt the primitive ſhock. Her eyes grew wild, her language became frantic, her cheeks flufhed, and her mind was diſordered. She ſprang from the ground, and hung upon Mr. Evington's neck, exclaiming, " Ah! I will ſtill call you father; for Oſmond is yet my huſband—I am, you all know, his betrothed wife—Heaven and earth witneſſed our mutual vow—Oh! that I could weep like ye! oh! my father! teach me how, for mine eyes have ceaſed to do their office."

Mr. Evington, almoſt as diſtracted as herſelf, claſped her in his arms, without being able to offer a word of conſolation.—Sir George Beaufort endeavoured

to

to conſole Mrs. Evington and his wife, and Charles Sinclair ſincerely ſympathized with the unhappy Maria.

A ſcene of more cruel diſtreſs never preſented itſelf round a nuptial board, than that which now took place at Mrs. Montgomery's table: vainly did ſhe condole firſt with one, and then another; ſighs were all the anſwers ſhe obtained, and tears mingled with her own.

At length the effuſions of grief became calmer; Mr. Evington ordered the carriage, and with the reſt of his family returned home, where they reſpectively indulged their ſorrow, which, in ſome meaſure, ſoon afterwards ſubſided in the duties of ſociety, and attendance on Mr. Evington and Matilda, whoſe healths by various diſappointments, and this recent ſhock, confined them to their ſeparate chambers.—Nine days Matilda remained in a ſtate of delirium;—a raging

ing fever ſucceeded the reſtoration of her ſenſes, and for ſome weeks her life became precarious.

Lady Stanhope Murdoc began now to experience the mortification her own imprudence had brought upon herſelf.—The numerous viſitors who lately flocked to her houſe came, but came only at preſent to hear her ſtory, and never after to return; hence every day brought leſs company, and thoſe houſes which were open to the ſilly, the affluent Lady Stanhope, and with ſmiles received her, were now cloſed, or the owners always ſaid to be *out.* Added to which, the report of her huſband's having abſconded for fraud, circulated rapidly among his creditors, who in ſwarms demanded payment of their bills; and finding themſelves repulſed, without loſs of time ſent in executions upon his effects. Lady Murdoc, in this dilemma, raved and deprecated the hour ſhe married,

ried, without offering either to help herſelf, or to aſk advice of thoſe ſhe deemed her ſevereſt enemies, but who were in reality her only true friends. In this embarraſſment ſhe ſtill remained when Sir George Beaufort deſired to be admitted. He entered and found her ſeated in her elegant dreſſing-room, where luxury and coſtlineſs dazzled the eye from every corner. The beſt inſtruments (on which ſhe played not), of every deſcription, ornamented the apartment; books bound in the moſt ſuperb ſtile, filled a no leſs elegant bookcaſe; with every other part of the furniture equally magnificent. Lady Stanhope Murdoc, however, appeared in no manner like the miſtreſs of ſuch a houſe. Her dreſs, though coſtly, was neglected and ill aſſorted; her *addreſs*, at no time graceful, was ſullen, as her looks were ill-humoured.

"You are come, I ſuppoſe, Sir George, to

to triumph over Sir Stanhope's unhappy wife, now that you have baniſhed her huſband."

"My conduct, Lady Stanhope, ought ſufficiently to reprove this ſuggeſtion, when you recal to mind, that Sir Stanhope's *life* depended on my diſpoſal, which life has been ſpent in atrocities towards myſelf and family. However, madam, I feel too much for your actual ſituation to wiſh to aggravate your miſfortunes, by reviving the cauſe of them; and I came on purpoſe to adviſe with you what ſteps were beſt to be taken for your future maintenance.

"Indeed I believe I muſt ſtarve, ſir, for the houſe is full of creditors.—See there!" cried her ladyſhip, pointing to a pile of tradeſmen's bills that lay on the table, "there, ſir, are demands for thouſands."—"I ſuppoſed as much, and would propoſe, madam, that you ſhould quit London, which can offer no charms

in

in the preſent predicament, taking your clothes and jewels to turn into money, upon which condition, my ſiſter Louiſa, and my nephew Munſter, have conſented, with me, to allow you a ſmall penſion, to enable you to live with your mother; as Sir Stanhope's eſtates and his property are confiſcated, and will be divided among his numerous creditors, ſuppoſing I do not avail myſelf of my own, which is overburthened with mortgages."

"With my mother! Sir George?—impoſſible! wholly impoſſible! conſider, ſir, the appearance it would have! how I ſhould be looked upon by my neighbours!—after living in the elegant ſtyle I have done in St. James's-ſquare, I could not condeſcend to do it, ſir—I ſhould be laughed at—what a barbarous ſituation is mine!—it's monſtrous hard for a woman of quality to be ſo perplexed, teazed, and buffeted about from one place

to

to another—monſtrous hard I declare! it is quite inhuman!"

Sir George Beaufort made no reply to this haughty refuſal; he conſidered it as the mere effuſions of an arrogant ſpirit, and the ungenerous language of an angry uneducated woman, who muſt on recollection refute her own words. He walked up and down the room; then, with an air of inattention, opened ſome of the books, without ſeeming to notice his ungracious companion. Lady Stanhope appealed to him in vain; until the tone of her voice altered, he reſolved to be ſilent. She now began to ſee that her proud ſpirit muſt ſubmit, as ſhe already knew from the land-ſteward, Sir George Beaufort's account to be juſtly true; and as ſhe had taken no precaution before marriage to have any ſettlements, nor poſſeſſed any fortune of her own, ſhe foreſaw no alternative, but to accept Sir George's noble offer; and however

however cruel it ſeemed in her opinion, to hide herſelf in the country, upon recollection ſhe obſerved, that provided her mother would accompany her out of Devonſhire, ſhe would take reſolution to quit London; but, as ſhe had not written to her ſince her marriage, ſhe felt aſhamed to do it at this unſeaſonable juncture.

Notwithſtanding the diſpleaſure ſuch intelligence gave, Sir George now anſwered her by undertaking to conciliate Mrs. Armintor with her daughter; becauſe he apprehended, that were ſhe permitted to follow her own inclinations, they muſt ultimately lead her to ruin. This point being ſettled, Sir George further adviſed her to retire to a ready-furniſhed lodging, until her mother's anſwer arrived, which he flattered her would be ſatisfactory. Lady Stanhope acknowledged this proof of kindneſs, and tears of gratitude at laſt took

took place of the ill-judged haughtineſs ſhe ſhewed on his entrance.

In due time Mrs. Armintor's anſwer brought her indulgent pardon, extended even to the inconvenience of herſelf, by complying with her daughter's wiſhes: nay, ſhe condeſcended to allow her daughter's requeſt to be natural, after the diſappointment ſhe had experienced. In conſequence Lady Stanhope quitted London, but with an aching heart, ſtill perſuading herſelf that her huſband being fled to America would accelerate his death, and that ſhe might yet reviſit the *faſcinating* metropolis, if not in the grandeur ſhe had been accuſtomed to exhibit, poſſibly with a pleaſanter companion. This latent hope ſolaced, in ſome degree, the regret ſhe gave on bidding its well-known and ever-remembered edifices farewel.

A few months elapſed without any material intervention of incident, ſave Matilda's

Matilda's ſlow recovery, when Mr. Evington and his family ſet off to their country-houſe at Ivy-bridge.

Sir George and Lady Beaufort accompanied them part of the way, and then viſited the late Sir William's eſtate in Hampſhire, which Sir Stanhope had never occupied, perhaps for reaſons too well known in his own breaſt, as much as from a diſinclination to quit the reſort of public amuſements, and watering-places, unleſs detained elſewhere by the hope of intrigue and gambling: of courſe it had fallen from neglect to decay.

Matilda, accompanied by Mrs. Munſter, directed her ſteps towards *Evans' Hall*, where every object tore open the wounds in her boſom anew. The ſervants welcomed her with joy, but were ſtruck to find her ſtill in the deepeſt mourning, which ſhe now wore for

her affianced Oſmond " Ah! my deareſt Mrs. Munſter," ſaid Matilda, as ſhe entered her father's hall, after having given her hand to each of the greeting domeſtics, " how my heart bleeds! here it was my beloved father turned round before he ſtepped into the carriage, for the laſt time, to enjoin all theſe good creatures to take care of this now deſolate houſe and grounds. Methinks I hear his voice even yet. 'We ſhall have great rejoicings,' ſaid my poor dear father, 'and who knows but we may bring you another maſter.'"

Mrs. Munſter remembered the words, but ſeeing Matilda greatly affected, ſhe ſupported her, and hurried into the parlour.—" Here too, madam, he uſed to ſit in this chair. In this room, dear Emma's nuptial eve was celebrated; do you remember how merry we were? In this very room poor Oſmond gave me on the ſame evening thoſe elegant poems,

poems, the "*Triumphs of Temper*," and "*Pleaſures of Memory*."—Hapleſs companion of my youth!—where now exiſts my pleaſure? Memory has none left for me, unleſs indeed it is dwelling on thy amiable qualities. O, memory, can'ſt thou adminiſter no relief ſave this? Are all thy pleaſures turned to pangs of recollection?" She ceaſed, and covered her face with her hands, while Mrs. Munſter uſed the moſt affectionate language to aſſuage her gloomy reflections. Matilda heard her in ſilence, but no ſooner had ſhe accuſtomed herſelf to behold one object with calmneſs, than another preſented itſelf, whoſe affinity to the laſt revived every ſenſation of grief. She drooped again in deep deſpondency.—Mrs. Munſter truſting that time would meliorate the acuteneſs of her ſorrow, only gently remonſtrated now and then, with her adopted daughter, and implored her not to give way to thoſe unavailing re-

grets which it is the province of fortitude to circumſcribe within certain limits.

Mrs. William Munſter, the happy bride, being left alone while her huſband of neceſſity joined his ſhip, accepted Matilda's invitation to Evans' Hall (till her couſin Mr. James Evans took poſſeſſion of it), and in her friendſhip ſhe unboſomed her grief, and indulged her affliction. They frequently wandered over the gardens and grounds together, and as frequently to the manor-houſe of Mr. Evington, where Maria always joined them, and never failed to viſit the urn, ſupported by the figure of an angel *, Oſmond's favourite ſpot in the park, round which they planted every ſweet flower that could be ſelected, and conſtantly bedewed them with tributary tears of real ſorrow: here every trifling action, which related to the unfortunate

* See vol. i. page 231.

Oſmond,

Oſmond, was recapitulated with a ſort of melancholy pleaſure, which rather relieved than oppreſſed their hearts.—Mrs. Evington ſeldom joined the young trio: the ſcene affected her ſpirits too much, and left a gloom on them that whole days could not diſſipate.

Here young Henry Aſhwood and his wife Liſette came, ſupporting the venerable grey-headed farmer, to offer their lamentations: here they repeated, with heartfelt acknowledgements, to the lovely mourners, the obligations they conſidered themſelves under to the fallen hero, and the beſt of men.—"Well," cried old Aſhwood, addreſſing Matilda, "God permitted our noble young maſter to live, and live eſteemed by every body; he now has taken him to his heavenly throne of mercy, and will reward his goodneſs: it were wicked to repine, my dear young lady." "Oh he

was indeed beloved by all who knew his tranſcendent virtues!" ſighed Matilda, "for

> 'He *was* a man, take him for all in all, I ſhall not look upon his like again.'"

She wept and repeated Hamlet's words over and over ſeveral times.

"It pleaſed God to rob me of my little Eglantine," replied old Aſhwood, wiping the tears from off his furrowed cheeks; "a better girl never lived; but it has pleaſed him to give me another in this good Liſette: ſhe would have joined in our tears; for ſhe loved Mr. Oſmond to her heart—ah poor Eglantine!"—"Alas! poor girl!" echoed Maria.

Perhaps among the number of mourners, none more ſincerely deplored the loſs of Oſmond than did de Belville's family; and frequently the counteſs and little Edward came alſo to condole with,

and

and pay their reſpects to Mr. and Mrs. Evington, in whoſe company they paſſed much of their time.

The beauty of the country which ſurrounded them, added to the renovating ſmiles of ſpring, tended much to re-animate their dejected ſpirits, together with the ſociety of Colonel Fitz-James, Charles Sinclair, and the young Marquis de Courcy, who all formed members of the preſent party, and by various means ſought ſeverally to diſpel their griefs.—Maria found de Courcy not an unſucceſsful comforter: an elegant perſon, a pleaſing countenance, and graceful deportment, with the excellent qualities of his mind, combined to render him an acquiſition to his acquaintance, but a dangerous friend to the female boſom. His fortune, from the calamities of the war, was unequal to his rank in life, yet ſufficient to ſupport himſelf in an

handſome ſtyle. — Had Matilda experienced as much conſolation from the aſſiduity of Charles Sinclair, ſhe would have found more charms in that ſociety which ſhe ſtill ſhunned on every poſſible occaſion

CHAP.

CHAPTER XVI.

" —Since from life I take the draughts you ſee,
If men diſlike them, do they cenſure me ?"

POPE.

"IT is this day three months," ſaid Matilda, as ſhe was walking with Mr. and Mrs. Evington in the garden, " ſince we left London, my dear madam; how altered is the ſcene of nature! how cold and comfortleſs did every object appear as we travelled!"—" It was, indeed, my love, a wretched journey," replied Mr. Evington, " and never ſhall be taken by me again. No—London ſhall number me no more among its gay inhabitants: there I received the bittereſt portion of grief fate could adminiſter, and every

object there will for ever bear teſtimony in my idea of the ſickening draught."

Mrs Evington perceived that this ſubject led to melancholy reflections, which her heart notwithſtanding inceſſantly dwelt upon. She obſerved how ſorry ſhe was that Matilda had not accompanied her daughter and Mrs. Munſter halfway, to meet Lady Beaufort from Hampſhire, ſince the weather turned out to be ſo inviting. "I am a thouſand-fold happier here," rejoined Matilda; "I love Lady Beaufort, but my ſpirits are yet unequal to the participation of pleaſure; indeed I always imagine that my very preſence caſts a degree of ſadneſs on thoſe around me."

At this period of the converſation, a ſervant delivered Mr. Evington a note, ſaying a gentleman waited for an anſwer. —Mr. Evington opened the note and read;

"*Fearful*

" *Fearful of alarming my honoured father and mother, by my ſudden appearance, I write this ſcrap to convince them that their ſon lives, and is impatient to embrace them.*

" OSMOND."

Mrs. Evington and Matilda walked forward, while Mr. Evington peruſed the ſcrap, which he gazed upon in mute aſtoniſhment: he rubbed his eyes again and again, diſbelieving what he ſaw. Again he fancied that his imagination had deceived him; but eager to be ſatiſfied, he haſtened to the houſe, ejaculating at every ſtep—" This muſt be an error! O! it cannot be Oſmond! have I not his watch and ſeals—the picture—the letter—the returns too?—O! no! no! it cannot be my ſon!"

Peter then ran to meet him, crying, in breathleſs pleaſure, " Indeed, maſter, I ſaw him with my own eyes, felt him

with my own hands, heard him ſpeak—'Fore george! our young maſter's come to life again!"

Mr. Evington's feelings were unutterable; he thought the garden walk appeared amazingly long, and imagined as he looked upon the houſe, inſtead of approaching it he wandered a contrary way; at length, however, he croſſed the threſhold, and in an inſtant found himſelf in Oſmond's arms—Happy father! happy ſon! no words could expreſs their mutual feelings.

Oſmond knew the returns in the Gazettes had repreſented him as killed; yet ſeeing his parent's approach in a ſuit of mourning, penetrated him to the heart.

"The knowledge, dear ſir, of the diſtreſs my ſuppoſed death would occaſion at home, has gone nearly to promote it by

by anxiety; yet this meeting overpays it all—Will you now have the goodneſs to clear the miſtake to my mother and ſiſter?—I ſuppoſe our ſweet Matilda is at the hall?"

Mr. Evington then undeceived him, adding, they would both welcome their friend in a ſhort time; for which purpoſe he left him, to unfold the ſubject by degrees to Mrs. Evington.—"I have," ſaid Mr. Evington, on rejoining his wife, "juſt ſeen a gentleman who thinks it very probable, notwithſtanding that letter from the officer, that our ſon might be taken priſoner, among the wounded of the enemy."

Mrs. Evington ſhook her head: Matilda replied, "had that been the caſe, depend upon it, ſir, we ſhould have heard from him before now."

"I aſſure you, he has given me the ſtrongeſt hopes," continued Mr. Evington; "for he affirms that it often happens,

pens, and they cannot always ſend letters."

Matilda fixed her ſearching eyes upon his countenance, adding, "O! my dear ſir! you have awakened ſuch falſe hopes I fear in my breaſt, that I ſhall be inceſſantly expecting his return."

"Would to Heaven," cried Mrs. Evington, "there were any truth in ſuch comforting intelligence! but you ſeem unuſually cheerful, my dear Mr. Evington, have you received any good news which you conceal from us?—you would not be ſo unkind—"

"Yes, my dear madam, I read it in his face—O! ſpeak ſir, ſpeak! or I die in ſuſpenſe! can it be Oſmond himſelf?"

"It *is* himſelf!—He lives, and in health—waiting to ſalute you both."

Mrs. Evington threw herſelf in her huſband's arms, exclaiming, "Then I am the happieſt of mothers!"—Matilda was already half way down the garden walk, where

where Oſmond, who had watched them from the window, flew to meet her—"My deareſt life! my love!" exclaimed Oſmond, folding her to his boſom, death had nearly ſevered us on earth—but we never part again—Come, ſweet Matilda! ſee yonder our mother chides my delay."

After giving free acceſs to the rapture of boundleſs joy which now took place of deſpair, Oſmond explained by what means he eſcaped.—"You were not miſinformed by the newſpapers in ſome reſpects, as when left on the field of battle for dead, I certainly muſt have periſhed had it not been for an Iriſh officer in the French ſervice, whoſe life in a previous ſkirmiſh I gave at his ſon's interceſſion, then a private in my compainy.—This man, it ſeems, by accident fell upon me, at the moment one of our ſoldiers took poſſeſſion of my watch and ſeals, and what was precious as life itſelf, my ſweet Matilda's picture.

This

This Iriſhman tells me he permitted the trinkets to be taken, leſt they might imagine he meant to keep them himſelf, it being impoſſible to remove my apparently dead body: he recollected my perſon, and being himſelf in the French regimentals, he reſolved to have me buried with due honours, in caſe I ſurvived not. Meanwhile the worthy fellow tore off his ſhirt, bandaged my wounds, eſpecially this on my forehead, which you ſee, Matilda, has deſtroyed what little beauty I had before"—pointing to a deep ſcar on his forehead—" Not in my opinion, I aſſure you," replied Matilda, " but proceed"—" With ſome of his companions," rejoined Oſmond, " he bore me from the field of battle among the enemy's wounded, much againſt their will, had not O'Hara, the gentleman's name, ſilenced them by bribes and promiſes;—ſhortly afterwards I opened my eyes, and by O'Hara's unremitting attentions, became able to walk in a fort-

night's

night's time with crutches. I wiſhed to forward a letter to you; but we were ſo narrowly watched, that every effort proved ineffectual: one letter an Engliſh ſoldier promiſed to deliver; if it never reached you, I ſuppoſe the poor man is either killed, or made a priſoner. At laſt a change of priſoners taking place, I among the number fortunately obtained my liberty. Thus in a few words is this extraordinary circumſtance explained.—The generous O'Hara has accompanied me to England by ſtealth, where I hope his ſon will be rewarded for what the father cannot be during this war."

Every heart unanimouſly offered thanks to Heaven, for thus miraculouſly preſerving a life ſo equally precious to them all; and, in the ſame breath, anticipated the delight this unexpected return would afford the remainder of the party, by the enjoyment of thoſe exquiſite ſenſations which can never be felt by ſtrangers to

afflictions; ſenſations which are alone experienced by thoſe whoſe boſoms, ſoftened by the tears of ſorrow, glow at the ſmile of happineſs;—"And who, like ourſelves," ſaid Mr. Evington, "have a heart to acknowledge and adore the devine hand, which inviſibly directs us through all our troubles in life?"

The ſound of carriages announced that Lady Beaufort with her party were arrived, Oſmond retired, while his parents diſpoſed them to meet him without that violent ſurpriſe, which his preſence muſt have otherwiſe occaſioned; this taſk being delicately performed, Mrs. Evington and Matilda led the two enraptured ſiſters to him, and giving them time to expreſs, though imperfectly, that happineſs they now experienced, unalloyed by pain, Oſmond, ſupported by his two ſiſters, entered the drawing-room, amidſt the ſincere and heartfelt congratulations of the party preſent, conſiſting of the two Mrs. Munſter's

ſters, Colonel Fitz-James, Charles Sinclair, and the young Marquis de Courcy, &c. &c.

The ſable teſtimonials of affection which now encircled Oſmond on all ſides—for Mrs. Munſter and her daughter-in-law, in compliment, and indeed from ſympathy, were habited in black—overwhelmed his feelings—the tear of ſenſibility guſhed uncontrolled down his manly cheek — " I will explain their ſource, dear Matilda," ſaid Oſmond, addreſſing Miſs Evans, who obſerved them fall with concern; " they ſpring from the nobleſt fountain of nature, genuine gratitude—O! my beloved parents! and you, deareſt of women! can you wonder at my being overpowered? God grant I may make as good a huſband and as happy a father as I am a bleſſed ſon! my obligations will even then be ſhort of thoſe I feel at this moment, for your tranſcendent goodneſs."—He then preſſ-

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ed Matilda's hand to his lips, as much to hide the gliſtening drops which bedewed his face, as to gain a tranſient reſpite to recover himſelf—" Come, my dear brother," cried Lady Beaufort, " we are ſufficiently overjoyed to ſee you here, and we require no more of theſe affecting diſcourſes and heartfelt declarations, to dim our bright eyes, and ſpoil our pretty faces; for you may talk of *weeping beauties* as much as you pleaſe, I dare ſay to ſome people they do look remarkably handſome; for my own part, I never fancied a red glazed eye, a pale poliſhed cheek, and a heavy dejected countenance, had any peculiar lovelineſs —now I think Matilda and Maria would ſubdue more hearts in five minutes with their ſmiles, than with their tears in five years—ſo thinks my good brother, now don't you, Oſmond?" demanded Lady Beaufort, with that ſweet good-humour inherent in every thing ſhe ſaid or did, and which rendered her always cheerful.

Matilda

Matilda roſe, and whiſpered to Maria, that ſhe thought their deep mourning depreſſed her brother's ſpirits. Maria mentioned it to her mother; Lady Beaufort ſeconded the remark, and beckoned to the bride and Mrs. Munſter, to leave the room. When the ſupper bell aſſembled the circle together again, they all appeared in white muſlins and coloured ribbons.

"This change is kind indeed!" cried Oſmond, "for in reality I apprehended that ſorrow had taken her reſidence here, the manſion of peace, where happineſs alone ſhould reign—See! even my own Matilda has thrown aſide her diſmal gown; and though I obſerve no colour decorates her robe, every ſnowy fold is an emblem of its fairer miſtreſs."

"While memory perpetually reminded me," replied Matilda, "that Oſmond was no more; when memory inceſſantly whiſpered that the beſt of fathers would never

never again comfort his unhappy daughter; that habit, correſponding with the colour of my mind, became congenial to my ſentiments:—but now, now, gladneſs redawns upon my heart; and though memory ſtill reminds me of my irreparable loſs in the deareſt of fathers, it forbids me to greet your bleſt return in colours it does not prevent me complimenting it in this *colourleſs* attire."

The ſocial *round table* again boaſted of mirth and conviviality. The happy gueſts remained until a late hour—the young Marquis de Courcy and Colonel Fitz-James were not unintereſted partakers of the evening's amuſements—and Sir George and Lady Beaufort retired better ſatisfied with the occurrences of the day than any preceding ones they remembered.

Early the next morning Doctor Orton by his preſence gave even additional hilarity

hilarity to the pleaſure which reigned at the manor-houſe.—The worthy Doctor having been upon a viſit in Norfolk, met his pupil without any extraordinary emotions of ſurpriſe, from being uninformed of his ſuppoſed death; but ſoon became acquainted with it from Oſmond and his family, and warmly expreſſed his congratulations—" Well, my good doctor," cried Oſmond, " every hour of my life in ſome manner is indebted to you—it is ſtill greatly in your power to ſurcharge my obligations."

" My *power* is ſmall," replied the venerable preceptor, " ſuch as it is, till the lateſt hour of my exiſtence, it ſhall be at your command; provided you will ſubmit patiently if it fails of ſucceſs."

" To be ſure I will, my good ſir; however, no moralizing—Matilda is the perſon in queſtion—Matilda is my conſtant theme—and when Matilda is the ſubject, acknowledge it is the moſt delightful as the moſt congenial to my heart—long have her

her chains hung heavy upon me, becauſe they were not rivetted by herſelf. This diſtreſs, as I wrote you, exiſts no longer, and I wiſh your wiſe perſuaſions may prevail with her to remove another nearly as painful; and ſuffer you to rivet our bonds of marriage immediately. Conſider, my good doctor, were I forced from her again, it may be for ever. What ſignifies being in mourning which is nearly expired?—Here ſhe comes! *en propria perſona*—now do this—I will retire a few minutes, and if you ſucceed my obligations are eternal."

Oſmond repaired to his family, who were anxious to inform him of the late tranſaction that had taken place reſpecting Sir Stanhope; he commiſerated the crimes of the one, while he pitied the deluded and unfortunate Lady Murdoc, as much as he rejoiced that in the detection of them *ſome* were rendered happy, eſpecially as it had contributed to unite

two

two young people he moſt eſteemed among his friends: "Thus through misfortunes you ſee, my dear ſon," concluded Mr. Evington, "we are often recompenſed beyond our ſufferings."

Doctor Orton then approached Oſmond, with Matilda: "No conſideration can influence Miſs Evans," ſaid the reverend doctor, "to forfeit her word, or the reſpect ſhe judges herſelf bound in duty to offer to the memory of her departed father. In anſwer to the ſuggeſtion that your profeſſion may call you away, Miſs Evans will experience as much anxiety in the abſence of her huſband as ſhe would do in parting with her lover; I am therefore ſorry that my embaſſy has failed, though I cannot help approving the motives."

Oſmond, finding himſelf compelled to wait a period of four months, ſubmitted with reluctance; and ſhortly afterwards repaired to London, where, on being

preſented at Court, he was promoted to the rank of captain, and obtained in conſequence of his bravery, the wounds he received, with the dangers he ſurmounted, leave to remain in England for ſix months to raiſe recruits, by which time his regiment returned from the continent.

With the money which young Munſter inſiſted upon Oſmond's receiving, and which he lent him at Plymouth, he purchaſed a colonelcy in the guards, and received the hand of Matilda that week in which her mourning expired.—Maria attended as her bridemaid, and immediately afterwards gave her hand to the young Marquis de Courcy. As Mr. and Mrs. Evington perceived their daughter's attachment to this young nobleman, they approved of his propoſals; often, however, rallying Maria on her determination to have a foreigner. Young Sinclair declared his countrymen would commence hoſtilities with her, and jocoſely requeſted to learn

learn if any of them had given her offence previous to her quitting England.

The de Belvilles participated in their brother's felicity with every poſſible mark of affection, while little Edward, the true merry-andrew on the occaſion, who ſtill thought himſelf a perſon of conſequence, tended to promote the hilarity of the day by a thouſand ſagacious yet roguiſh remarks on all parties preſent.

Under the protection of a fond, indulgent parent, Lady Stanhope Murdoc found an aſylum, if not equal to her high notions of ſplendour, far more productive of happineſs than that ſhe enjoyed for a while in the midſt of munificence and turmoil—ſhe had now leiſure to reflect on the viciſſitudes of fortune; and though her volatile diſpoſition ſeldom permitted her to dwell long together on ſuch reflections, they would ſometimes irreſiſtibly obtrude themſelves, and by de-

grees forced her to acknowledge the impropriety of her paſt conduct. As the perfidy of her wretched huſband became notorious, the report, in gigantic ſtrides, reached the ſmall neighbourhood wherein ſhe reſided, attended with uſual exaggerations, and an endleſs train of untruths. Sir Stanhope's iniquitous character even extended to his unfortunate wife; and inſtead of meeting with pity, univerſal condemnation purſued her wherever her ſtory became known. Under this predicament, ſhe learnt to appreciate the ineſtimable value of an unſullied reputation, and with ſincere contrition and atonement for her paſt miſconduct, ſpent a few repentant years by attending to the ſage counſels of an excellent mother; whoſe only fault aroſe from over-tenderneſs, and too much lenity of diſpoſition. —Sir Stanhope Murdoc under a feigned name took refuge in the heart of America, where, like the noxious weed, he vegetates, avoided by and avoiding every body,

the

the complete victim of wretchedneſs; inceſſantly haraſſed by diſeaſe of mind and body, without being able to ſummon to his relief the recollection of one benevolent action unattended by oſtentation; or heal his memory by one cheering thought of diſintereſtedneſs, to ſoften the pangs of a torturing conſcience.

Charles Sinclair, like his parents, too partial to what is denominated a *faſhionable* life, and in conſequence addicted to faſhionable follies, as the light of reaſon ſtrengthened with his years, amply compenſated for the errors of youthful indiſcretions, and the many hours of ſorrow which were in the early part of his marriage with a young lady of good family, on her ſide, too often waſhed by unavailing tears.

The amiable Mrs. Munſter remained with Mrs. Oſmond Evington, who, notwithſtanding her mother's declaration, that

that *ſhe* was the fledged bird, and required a ſubſtitute for the privation of her *three* children, the daughter-in-law perſiſted that the daily admonitions of her beloved monitreſs were more neceſſary than ever.

Colonel Fitz-James continued to extend a paternal care over young Munſter, in whoſe ſociety and in the well-earned eſteem of his wife and mother, he received the ſublime recompence of a noble mind, that of having been inſtrumental to the promotion and to the conſummation of happineſs in others.

Colonel and Mrs. Evington, by their conduct through life, evinced, that feeling hearts, governed by juſt principles and noble ſentiments, refined by claſſical education, are the certain conſtituents of permanent felicity in themſelves, and will infallibly promote it in others, who are fortunately connected with ſuch characters.

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